

الْبَيْعَةُ لِلَّهِ



the promise is for Allāh



notes for a talk given by:

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إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

°innamā yurīdu-llāhu li-yudhhiba °ankumu-r-rijāsa
°ahl al-bayti wa yuṭahhirakum taṭāhīrā

Allāh only wishes to remove impurity from you
oh People of the House
and to purify you with a thorough purification.
(Sūrah al-°Aḥzāb 33:33)



عن النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وصحبه وسلم, قال: من كنت مولاه فعلي مولاه

“*man kanat mawlahu fa-°alī mawlahu*”

“Whose *mawla* (master) I am, Alī is his *mawla* (master).”



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The Promise is for Allāh – al-Bay^catu-li-Llāh

The Promise is for Allāh – al-Bay[°]atu-li-Llāh

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أنا مدينة العلم، وعلي بابها
فمن أراد العلم، فليأت الباب

°Anā madīnatu-l-°ilm wa °Alī bābuhā;
Fa-man °arāda-l-°ilm fa-l-yati-l-bāb

I am the city of knowledge and °Alī is its gate;
so whoever desires knowledge, let him enter the gate.
(*al-Mustadrak*, by al-Hakim, *Fada'il as-Sahaba*, by Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal)



The Prophet ﷺ said:

man kanat mawlāhu fa-°alī mawlāhu

“One who has me as his master has °Alī as his master.”

عن شعبة, عن سلمة بن كهيل, قال: سمعت أبا الطفيل يحدث, عن أبي سريحة رضي الله عنه – أو زيد بن أرقم رضي الله عنه (شك شعبة) – عن النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وصحبه وسلم, قال: من كنت مولاه فعلي مولاه. • وقد روى شعبة هذا الحديث, عن ميمون أبي عبد الله, عن زيد بن أرقم رضي الله عنه, عن النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وصحبه وسلم. •

“Shu°bah relates from Salmah bin Kuhayl: I heard this from Abū Tufayl that Abū Sarīhah (رضي الله عنه) – or Zayd bin Arqam (رضي الله عنه) – related that the Prophet ﷺ said: One who has me as his master has °Alī as his master. Shu°bah has related the tradition from Maymūn Abi °Abdullāh, who related it on authority of Zayd bin Arqām (رضي الله عنه) who related it from the Holy Prophet ﷺ.”

°Asqalānī said in *Fathu-l-bārī* (7:74): Tirmidhī and Nasā°ī narrated the tradition and it is supported by numerous chains of transmission. Albānī says in *Silsilatu-l-°ahādīth* it is sound (*ṣaḥīhah*) (4:331 # 1750) that its chain of authorities is sound according to the conditions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “°Alī is from me and I am from °Alī and no one represents me except °Alī.” *Sunan ibn Majāh*, Ḥadīth No.119.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to °Alī (رضي الله عنه): “Your position to me is like the position of Harūn to Mūsā, except that there will be no Prophet after me.” Ṣaḥīh al-Bukhārī, Volume 5, Book 59, Ḥadīth Number 700. Ṣaḥīh Muslim Book 031, Ḥadīth Number 5913:

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I had just finished writing *Muḥammad* ﷺ – *Seal of the Prophets* ﷺ in the series on the Resolute Prophets ﷺ (أَوَّلُ الْعَزَمِ) and was about to begin the first of the new *bayān* which is on al-Mahdi ﷺ when I came to realise that in order to write about al-Mahdi ﷺ I would first have to write some more on Sayyidinā ‘Alī ﷺ in order to make the links, cross the t’s and dot the i’s (at least a few of them). Hence in this bayān, *The Covenant is for Allāh – al-Bay[‘]atu-li-Llāh* I will try to make palpable and further clarify that link and show the natural connections between the Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidinā ‘Alī ﷺ and al-Mahdi ﷺ, the Rightly Guided as al-Qā’im (القائم) or the “One who Rises” because he shall arise with Truth.¹

سمي القائم لقيامه بالحق



At the beginning of his mission the Prophet ﷺ said in a speech: (at the residence of Hazrat ‘Abū Ṭālib (ابوطالب) who was was a brother of the father of the Prophet ﷺ, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who had died before his ﷺ birth).

“Who amongst you shall support me in this matter and be my brother (*shaqīq*/شقيق), the executor of my will (*waṣī*/وصى), and my successor (*wārith*/وارث)?” All the listeners, with the exception of ‘Alī ﷺ, who was the youngest among them, kept silent.

‘Alī ﷺ responded by saying: “I will be your helper, Oh prophet of Allāh.”

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ then put his hand on the back of the neck of ‘Alī ﷺ and said: “This is my brother, executor of my will and successor; therefore, listen to him and obey him.”

Those present laughed and kept saying to ‘Abū Ṭālib: “Allāh has commanded you to listen to your son, and for you to obey him!”²

1. Regarding the naming of that personage as “al-Mahdi” as well it is not the case that “al-Qā’im” is the original title and “al-Mahdi” is a secondary title. Both are titles and the usage of each name has a separate reason. Rather, it can be said that the concept of the “Mahdi” is “the one whom Allāh ﷻ has guided” (من هداه الله) whereas “al-Qā’im” is the one who rise bearing the truth. Further from some narrations we understand another reason that the al-Qā’im ﷺ was given this title by Allāh ﷻ was because, in the worlds before this world, he used to stand and pray so hence the one who rises or stands for prayer.
2. Reported as Ṣaḥīḥ in The *Tarikh* of at-Tabarī, The *Tarikh* of ibn Asākir, *ad-Durr al-Manthūr* of as-Suyuti and *al-Mukhtaṣar* of Abul Fida

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Ibn Hishām recorded that: ‘Alī عليه السلام ‘Ibn Abi Ṭālib was the first male to believe in the Messenger ﷺ and that he prayed with him while he was only ten years old.³

The first three people to offer prayers were Muḥammad ﷺ, his wife Khadījah bint Khuwaylid (خديجة بنت خويلد) عليها السلام and ‘Alī عليه السلام.⁴ This event took place in front of the Ka‘bah.

‘Alī عليه السلام said: “I was the first one to accept ‘Islām at the hands of the Holy Prophet.”⁵ This conversion would have happened sometime between 610 CE, when Muḥammad ﷺ started sharing his experiences with the Angel Jibrīl عليه السلام with his immediate family, and 612 CE, when the Prophet ﷺ first began preaching in public in Makkah. Ibn Kathīr says: “It is clear that Muḥammad’s family believed before every other – his wife Khadījah, his freedman Zayd and the Wife of Zayd, Umm Ayman and ‘Alī and Warakah.”⁶

al-Ḥākim also narrated that: Salmān al-Fārsī عليه السلام said that the Prophet ﷺ said: “The first one of you to drink from the Basin (hawḍ al-kawthar/حوض لكوثر) on the Day of Judgment is the first Muslim from among you, ‘Alī, the son of ‘Abū Ṭālib.”⁷

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا وكيع ثنا شعبة عن عمرو بن مرة عن أبي حمزة مولى الأنصار عن زيد بن أرقم قال أول من أسلم مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم علي رضي الله تعالى عنه

Abdullah narrated to us, he said, ‘My father, said, Waki’, he said, Shu‘bah narrated to us from Amru bin Murrah from Abu Hamzah Mawla al-Ansari from Zayd bin ‘Arqām who said, “The first person to embrace ‘Islām with the Prophet ﷺ is ‘Alī عليه السلام.”⁸



It is not my intention to dwell on this or belabor this but there is a great deal of controversy in the Muslim world about this with one group saying that Abu Bakr aṣ-Ṣaddīq عليه السلام (أبو بكر), the sincere friend of the Prophet ﷺ, was the first “grown man” to embrace ‘Islam as ‘Alī عليه السلام was only a “child” of 10 or 12 when he embraced ‘Islām.

3. Biography of the Prophet, by Ibn Hishām, v1, p245

4. History al-Tabari, v2, p65

5. *Tarikh*, by al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, v4, p333

6. *Tarikh al-Khulafā’*, by as-Suyuti, p33

7. *al-Mustadrak*, by al-Ḥākim, v3, p112

8. *Muṣnad Aḥmad* 4/368 by ‘Imam Aḥmad

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The narrative goes like this. As a young man, Abu Bakr ؓ became a merchant and he traveled extensively in Arabia and neighboring lands in the Middle East, through which he gained both wealth and experience. On his return from a business trip to Yemen, he was told that, in his absence the Prophet ﷺ, had openly declared his prophethood. Not long after that, Abu Bakr ؓ accepted ‘Islām and was the first person *outside* the family of the Prophet ﷺ to openly become a Muslim and was instrumental in bringing many people to ‘Islām. Later his daughter, ‘Ā‘ishā ؓ was married to the Prophet ﷺ and after the death of the Prophet ﷺ he was selected as the first Kḫalifah of the Prophet ﷺ and oversaw the political expansion of ‘Islām and, perhaps more importantly, oversaw the standardization of the Qur’ān in a written form.

This happened after the victory over Musaylimah in the Battle of Yamama fought in 632 when ‘Umar ؓ (the second Kḫalif) saw that many of the Muslims who had memorized the Qur’ān had died in battle. Fearing that the Qur’ān may be lost or corrupted, Umar ؓ asked Abu Bakr ؓ to authorize the compilation and preservation of the Book in written form. After initial hesitation, Abu Bakr ؓ made a committee headed by Zayd ibn Thābit ؓ and ‘Alī ؓ which included the memorizers of the Qur’ān and ‘Umar ؓ to collect all verses of the Book. After collecting all Qur’ānic verses from texts in the possession of various saḥabah ؓ, Zayd ibn Thābit ؓ and members of the committee verified the reading by comparing with those who had memorized the Qur’ān. After they were satisfied that they had not missed out any verse or made any mistakes in reading or writing it down, the definitive text was then written down as one single manuscript and presented in a book form to Abu Bakr ؓ. It is believed that this process happened within one year of the death of the Prophet ﷺ when most of his companions ؓ were still alive.

The reason I mention the above is to try to make sure that the reader/listener understands that we are aware of the many controversies surrounding the widely held views of the various conflicts between Abu Bakr ؓ and his successors ؓ and ‘Imām Alī ؓ.

Our own position is that everything proceeds according to the plans of Allāh ﷻ who is the Best of Planners and that while the events that overtook the community (‘*ummah*/أُمَّة) after the death of the Prophet ﷺ may not be clear to us they are perfectly clear to Allāh ﷻ.

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As practioners of taṣawwuf and members of the school of °Imām Alī ؑ founded after the death of the Prophet ﷺ and in accord with his ﷺ teachings and sunnah (especially the sunnah of his ﷺ being a mercy (*raḥmah*) to all creation) we are not involved, and indeed refuse involvment, in the many political and cultural controversies which plague the °ummaḥ and serve only to divide it for the benefit of those who both inwardly and outwardly actively oppose the °ummaḥ and in Truth seek its ruination and ultimate demise.

We steadfastly remain the people or the community of the middle way in accordance with the words of Allāh ﷻ.

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ
وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

wa kadḥalika ja‘alnakum °ummatan wasatan
li takūnū shuhadā‘a ‘ala-n-nāsi
wa yakūna-r-rasūlu ‘alaykum shahīda

In this way We have made you a community of the center,
[or the middle way or the way of the heart]
so that you may act as witnesses against mankind
and the Messenger as a witness against you.

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:143)

With full knowldege that Prophet ﷺ of °Islām has stated, “We are the lights of the heavens and the earth and the ships of salvation. We are the repositories of knowledge, and toward us is the homecoming of all matters. Through our Mahdi ؑ (Rightly Guided One) all arguments shall be refuted, and he is the seal of the imams, the deliverer of the Muslim community (°ummaḥ), and the extremity of the light. Happy are those who hold onto our hand and are brought together in our love.”



It is of the utmost importance to the one writing these words that this point be clearly understood. Our shaykh, Dr, Ibrahim al-Batāwī ؑ, often told us, in Arabic, that politics are filth (*as-siyāsi najasīl/السياسة نجسي*) and advised us to remain, generally, hidden because humanity is going through a cycle of ignorance and violence and people have lost the spiritual sensory organs needed to recognize this lest we be uselessly persecuted or confused with those outer powers trying to organise human communities socially or politically.

As I have mentioned in earlier talks that regrettably in our times there has developed a certain Deformist [here I thank Dr Karim Crowe for this term and source of my thoughts which follow] mindset now becoming wide-spread, labeled “Salafist”, “Deobandi”, “Wahḥābi” or “Takfīrī” (and also “Basajī” & “Hojjateih”).

“This mentality strongly condemns the intellectual diversity of the rational and spiritual legacies of ʾIslām expressed in the legal theories of the schools of fiqh, in theology, in philosophy, in Sufi transformative practice and metaphysics (*taṣawwuf*), in favor of a coerced doctrinal uniformity characterized by an anti-rationalist intellectual minimalism. This current Deformist trend seeks to impose a shallow conformity rather than depth and diversity in religious knowledge, to coerce others to think and talk as they themselves do, and views everything in black-and-white rather than in full living color. The intent of Deformists is to monopolize and control the thinking of Muslims by means of a tyranny over thought and speech that is in reality a serious abuse of authority.”

The cruel ugly face of intolerance and ignorance is evident in many parts of the Muslim world today as I have tried to make clear in a number of my earlier talks which have dealt with events in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Mali, Nigeria etc.

The killing of innocents in ‘sectarian’ violence where grenades are tossed into *masajid* during communal prayers, bombs detonated during religious gatherings. Persecution and the denial of rights enforced against minority groups adhering to a particular doctrinal expression of ʾIslām condemned as heretical. Psycho-physical coercion of doctrinal “deviants” identified as security threats and often imprisoned by the “State”. Intimidation or purging of individuals from state, public and civic organs by overzealous guardians of “official” ʾIslāmīc organizations that police thought and speech conformity in the name of religious ‘authority’ characteristic of the Deformist mentality. An uncompromising “my way or the highway” mentality condemnation of diversity, critical thinking and spiritual experience represented by other streams of ʾIslāmīc thought and practice all of which produce a severe negative effect that is spreading across the Muslim world very much like a computer virus.

Hence the importance of Spiritual Transmission and the Spiritual Sciences derived from the Qurʾān and the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ which bring about the purification of the heart for surely there is a time coming which is –

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يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ • إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

yawma la yanfa[°]u mālun walā banūn

°illa man ata-llāha bi-qalbin salīm

the Day when neither wealth nor sons will be of any use
except for the one who comes to Allāh with a sound heart.

(Sūrah ash-Shu[°]arrāa[°] 26:88-89)

“True knowledge resides in the “Heart” or spiritual core of our being. Muslim [spirituality] starts with the Qur[°]ānic teaching that the divine breath is the very spirit that is infused into our Adamic clay: “Then He fashioned him in due proportion and breathed into him of His Spirit.” This divine spirit is our *fitra*—our primordial and innate spiritual nature – which pre-existentially affirms and testifies to its Origin in the Qur[°]ānic episode of the Covenant of “*Alastu bi Rabbikum*” (“Am I not your Lord?”) and is endowed with an innate knowledge of its obligations—the *°Amānah* or Divine Trust, the duties entrusted to humanity and to each of us individually and which constitute our *raison d’être*. This is the primordial self of whom the Prophet has said: “Every child is born according to *fitra*. Then its parents make it into a Christian, a Jew, or a Magian (Zoroastrian).” It is a self already endowed with the knowledge of its Maker (in other words, of the ultimate integrity of reality—in *°Islāmic* terms, *tawhīd*) even before its entry into this world. It is the spirit or *rūh*, whose discerning faculty is *°aql* or Intellect, not merely the discursive reason or the senses. This is the center and “Heart” of our consciousness, referred to in the famous *ḥadīth qudsī*: “My Earth and My Heaven cannot contain Me but the heart of the believer can contain Me”; and again in those Qur[°]ānic surahs that refer to the inscription of faith upon the “hearts” of men.

“This is the Heart which, while capable of “containing” that in us which is divine, is also capable, in Qur[°]ānic terms, of being “diseased” or “rusted” or “locked”. It is this knowing Heart – the seat of our conscience – that “fallen” man, now in a state of “heedlessness” (*ghaflah*/الغفلة), must strive, by divine grace, to awaken. This “awakening” operates as both an illumination and a liquefaction of the heart, simultaneously dispelling the darkness of its ignorance and melting the carapace of its existential hardness with the tender love of the spirit.”

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“Truth is an awakening into a state of Presence and the awareness of Presence, into a state of Self-remembering wholeness (or holiness) that is imbued with a sense of the sacred, a sacramentally charged all-absorbing and immersed awareness of the Omni-Presence of the Divine Countenance, so that its consciousness is illuminated with and moistened by the knowledge of its Maker.”⁹



This perspective of “spiritual” ʾIslām differs widely from the perspective of political ʾIslām which, in our time, both among the Sunnis and the Shī[°]a has become the dominant meme (μίμημα) of the ʾIslāmīc world”. Indeed spirituality or the spiritual view and understanding of the world has become anathema to many Muslims who have relegated spirituality to the status of bid[°]ah (reprehensible innovation) and look upon it as a foreign intrusion. These deiformers to erase spirituality from ʾIslām and to impose a shallow conformity rather than depth and diversity in religious knowledge, so as to coerce others to think and talk as they themselves do.

We might say that, for the most part, the outer form (*ḍḥāhri*) of ʾIslām has eclipsed or managed to denigrate and disparage any form of esoteric (*bāṭini*) ʾIslam reducing it to insignificance and to something despicable, blameworthy, culpable, wrong, bad, shameful, and ultimately dishonorable in the eyes of the average Muslim.

If you would like to see this in its visual form all you need to do is to look at what has happened in Makkah over the past twenty years if you want to see the triumph of the ḍḥāhri over the bāṭin.¹⁰



9. *The Metaphysics Of Human Governance: Imam ‘Ali, Truth and Justice* by M. Ali Lakhani

10. Note that the little black spot in the lower center is the Ka[°]bah.

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The Prophet ﷺ said in the end times you will see the barefooted, naked, destitute herdsman competing in constructing lofty buildings. Makkah is fast becoming a city for the rich and is being turned into a Disney Land! Historic and religiously important landmarks are being destroyed to make way for luxury hotels and malls,

The last ten years have seen an increase in the demolition of sites in Makkah and Medina. The Saudi authorities have deemed it necessary to raze large tracts of formerly residential neighborhoods around the two mosques to make way for pilgrimage-related infrastructure on the pretext that the annual Ḥajj continues to draw larger crowds year after year. In 2010, it was forecast that developers were going to spend an estimated \$13 billion on the largest expansion project in the city’s history. While there is widespread agreement for the need of facilities that can accommodate greater numbers of pilgrims these efforts are devoted almost exclusively to upscale projects which do not take into consideration the economic situation of the majority of the world’s Muslims. The development of high end hotels and condominium towers, restaurants, shopping centers including two luxury spas. has caused some to criticize the over-commercialization of a site which is fast becoming a Disney Land rather than the Divinely ordained sanctuary for Muslims.

Indeed the rapid influx of capitalist investment in Makkah and Madinah leads many to believe that money and economic growth are ultimately the bottom line for Saudi authorities. A proposition which critics argue works hand in hand with Wahḥābi state policy that looks to impose a massive cultural and social deletion within the Holy Cities, erasing any elements that give way to practices that go against the Wahnābī creed (or perhaps greed is more like it).

Not that this is a new phenomena but rather it is the continuation of what began in In 1801 and 1802 when the Wahnābīs under ‘Abdu-l-‘Azīz ibn Muḥammad ibn Saud attacked and captured the shrine cities of Karbala and Najaf in Iraq, massacring and raping Muslims and destroying the tomb of al-Ḥusayn ؑ among others. In 1803 and 1804 the Wahḥābi’s first captured Makkah and Madīnah and then set about destroying historical monuments and many holy sites and shrines, such as the shrine built over the tomb of Fatimah ؑ, the daughter of the Prophet ﷺ, and even intended to destroy the grave of Muḥammad ﷺ on the grounds that its existence led to idolatry.

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In Makkah, the tombs of direct relations of the Prophet ﷺ including his first wife Khadijah bint Khuwaylid ؓ were demolished at al-Ma^ʿala Cemetery. The house of Khadijah, ؓ where Muslims believe the Prophet ﷺ received some of the first revelations and where his children Faṭimah ؓ and Qasim ؓ were born. After her house was rediscovered during the extensions to Haram in 1989, it was covered over and it was turned into a library. In addition the house the Prophet ﷺ is widely believed to have been born in 570 was turned into a cattle market and now lies under a rundown building which was built 70 years ago as a compromise after Wahhabi clerics called for it to be torn down. Also Dar Al-Arqām, the first ʾIslamic school where Muḥammad ﷺ himself taught, has been torn down and destroyed as well as the house of the Prophet ﷺ in Medina, where he first lived after the migration from Makkah.

All of this is part of a general trend which began first of all by the hijacking of ʾIslām and has now become the full scale counterfeiting of ʾIslām.

In reality none of this is “new” but is rather the continuation of the opposition to the Prophet ﷺ which began in Makkah when conservative opposition arose to his ؓ original call. According to Ibn Ṣawd, the opposition in Makkah started when Muḥammad ﷺ delivered verses that “spoke shamefully of the idols they (the Makkans) worshiped other than Allāh ﷻ and mentioned the perdition of their fathers who he ؓ declared died in disbelief (*kufr*).”

As the numbers of his followers slowly grew, he became a threat to the local tribes and the rulers of the city, whose wealth rested upon the Ka^ʿbah, the focal point of polytheistic Makkan religious life, which the Prophet ﷺ threatened to overthrow.

His ؓ denunciation of Makkan traditional religion was especially offensive to his own tribe who never really forgave him from then to now and who in truth hated him both then and now because his ؓ teaching and his message stood in the way of their desires for the life of the world rather than the life of spirituality.

This hatred of the Prophet ﷺ continues from the past into the present though of course no one says as much and everything is hidden under false piety but those who opposed him then continue to oppose him ؓ now.

The names have changed but the actions and feelings are the same.

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It is this view which has at the same time reduced Sayidinā °Ali ؑ to being simply the fourth of the Khulafah Rashidūn ؑ and a figure caught up in the fiṭnah of those years and the struggles with °Ā‘ishā ؑ and Mu‘āwwiyah and various Ummayyad family feuds. A person of somehow reduced stature who played his part in the process of the °ummah becoming an empire. A man among men neither more nor less. Significantly that has gone hand in hand with the reduction of the Prophet ﷺ to a kind of glorified delivery boy who brought the message of Allāh ﷻ but in the end was “just” a human like the rest of us who walked in the market places and lived and died like all men inevitably do. These people believe that the Prophet ﷺ should be praised only as a human being. Indeed even invoking the name of the the Prophet ﷺ is thought by them to be heresy or doctrinal innovation (*bid‘ah*) – not to mention invoking that of °Alī ؑ.

Allah ﷻ has said: “Who ever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, I shall be at war with him. My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it.” related by Bukhārī. (38/40 Ḥadīth Qudsī, °Imām Nawawī)



From my perspective all of this can ultimately be tracked back to a decision that was made and then ratified by the early Muslim community which, in essence, has to do with the direction the °ummah was going to take after the death of the Prophet ﷺ.

Basically, as I have come to understand it after a quarter of a century of intensive thought and much soul searching, the choice was between political expediency and spiritual reality or necessity.

This will take some pages just to summarise and I trust the reader/listener will pay careful attention as it is a very rough summing up of 25 years, plus or minus, of very intensive inner search specifically into the last year of the life of the Prophet ﷺ, the farewell ḥajj, the declaration of Ghadīr al-Khumm (غدير الخم), the events leading up to his ﷺ death and subsequent events that brought us to the present.

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The very first thing to note is Ḥadīth 6.520 from Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī as narrated by Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه “Gabriel (Jibrīl عليه السلام) used to repeat the recitation of the Qur’ān with the Prophet once a year, but he repeated it twice with him in the year he died.” and this should be coupled with the Prophet ﷺ telling his daughter Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها that he had foreseen his own death imminently within the year.

Condisder this, “Day by day, the Muslims conquered many areas till they conquered Makkah. Eventually the whole Arab Peninsula submitted to ʾIslām. Fatimah رضي الله عنها rejoiced at the victories so that whenever she heard about one, she would hurry to her father's house to congratulate him. Her visits pleased him, and he would receive her and her children with the warmest welcome. On one visit, her father spoke to her confidentially. The following is the story as narrated by ʾAʿishah, one of the Mothers of the Believers رضي الله عنها:

“We, the wives of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah, were with him (during his last illness) and none was absent around him. Fatimah رضي الله عنها, who walked after the manner of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah, went to him. When he saw her, he welcomed her saying, “You are welcome, my daughter.” He then beckoned her to sit on his right side and told her something in secret that caused her to weep bitterly. Finding her grief stricken, he confided in her for the second time and she laughed.

“I said to her, ‘The Messenger of Allah has singled you out among the women (of the family) by speaking to you about something secretly and you wept.’ When the Messenger ﷺ recovered from his illness, I said to her, ‘What did the Messenger say to you’

“She replied, ‘I am not going to disclose the secret of the Messenger ﷺ’

“When he died, I said to her, ‘I adjure you by the right that I have upon you that you should narrate to me what the Messenger said to you.’

“She said, ‘Yes, now I can do that (so listen to it). When he talked to me secretly for the first time, he informed me that Jibrīl was in the habit of reciting the Qur’ān along with him once every year, but this year it had been twice and so he perceived his death quite near. ‘So fear Allāh and be patient,’ (he told me), as he ﷺ would indeed be a befitting forerunner for me.

“So I wept as you saw me. And when he saw me in grief he talked to me secretly for the second time and said, ‘Fatimah, are you not pleased that you should be at the head of the believing women of this Ummah?’ I laughed and it was that laughter you saw.” (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 6004).

The Prophet ﷺ then told his closest followers that, as they knew, the Angel Jibrīl ؑ came to him every year to recite the Qurʾān with him, but this year he came twice. He told them that he understood this to mean that his time was coming to an end, and thus told his close followers to call all people from across the Arabian peninsula and beyond to join him in his final pilgrimage to Makkah. This occasion marked the first time that Muslims of this number had gathered in one place in the presence of their leader. It has been reported that more than seventy thousand people followed him to Makkah and that on the fourth day of Dhu-l-Ḥijjah, more than one hundred thousand Muslims had entered Makkah to complete the rites of the Ḥajj.¹¹

Once you understand this you understand that when the Prophet ﷺ finally decided to fully¹² complete the rites of Ḥajj (as it had not been possible to do so before the signing of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah – صلح الحديبية) it was with the clear understanding that his end was near and that he was shortly going to die.

This is of the *utmost* importance – He knew he was shortly to die.

After completing the rites of the Ḥajj during, which he ﷺ also declared the validity of the Mut‘ah of Ḥajj or Ḥajj at-Tamattu (joy of Hajj), which involves relaxation of the ‘iḥram between the Umrah and Ḥajj, including the dress code and other prohibitions and then making a separate Umrah, all the Muslims who have come for Ḥajj began to leave Makkah in one group bound for the juncture of Wadi Rabigh – a natural spring fed wetland where the route split.

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11. these numbers are not meant to be exact but in Arabic hyperbole they are meant to mean various degrees of *many* and *multitudes*.
 12. The first pilgrimage or Umrah Dhu-l-Qa‘da (Umrah of the 11th month) was the first ritual journey that the Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims made after the Migration to Madinah. It took place on the morning of the fourth day of Dhu-l-Qa‘da 7 AH (629 CE), after the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah 6 AH (628 CE). The event lasted 3 days it was an umra (minor pilgrimage) and not a ḥajj.

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Wadi Rabigh is a wadi situated inland of the town of Rabigh, extending along the border of the al-Madinah and Makkah provinces in present day Saudi Arabia. A natural lake near Haggag, some 35km inland, fringed with reeds and fed by several permanent freshwater springs provides a natural wetland unique on the Tihamah.

Gḥadīr al-Kḥumm or the Pond of Kḥumm (غدير الخم) was their destination in the wadi and is a pond or marsh formed by a spring in the wadi, located to the east of the road from Madinah to Makkah, three Arab miles (roughly 4 to 6 km) from al-Johfa (modern Rabigh), roughly 180 km from both Makkah and Madinah situated on the Incense Route between Syria and Yemen and well known as it was where travelers could replenish their resources of water in the most arid part of Arabia between Makkah and Madinah and thus a natural stopping place when the caravan divided up between those going North and those going East.

On the way the following ʾāyāt was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ

يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

yāā °ayyuha-r-rasūlu balligh mā °ūnzila °ilayka mir-rabbika
wa-in lam taf°al famā ballaghta risālatahu
wa-llāhu ya°šimuka mina-n-nasi °
inna Allāha lā yahdi-l-qawma-l-kāfirīn

Oh Messenger!

Make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord,
for if you do it not, you will not have conveyed His message.

Allāh will protect you from the people.

Truly Allāh does not guide people who hide the Truth.

(Sūratu-l-Ma°idah 5:67)



To step back just a bit in time:

On the 9th of Dhū-l-Hijjah, 10 AH (9 March 632) in the valley of Mount °Arafat or the Mount of Mercy (جبل عرفة) the Prophet ﷺ delivered what is usually called his Farewell Sermon (Kḥuṭbatu-l-Wadā°/خطبة الوداع). This Farewell Sermon is mentioned in almost all books of ḥadīth such as al-Bukḥarī who both refers to it and quotes part of it in *Ṣāḥih al-Bukḥarī* as well as Aḥmad ibn Hanbal who provides the longest version of this sermon in his *Maṣṇad*.

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This is a speech addressed to all people regardless of their religions, national, racial or tribal affiliation or colors or times (his time or any time after him until the Day of Judgement or Yawmal-l-Qīyyāmah (يوم القيامة)). In it he ﷺ uses the term “Oh People” seven times and does not use the term-inology “Oh Muslims” or “Oh Believers” which was his habit. The intention of the Prophet ﷺ thus was to address all people everywhere for every moment forward in time.

He ﷺ begins by saying, “Oh People, lend me an attentive ear, for I know not whether after this year, I shall ever be amongst you again. Therefore listen to what I am saying to you very carefully and take these words to those who could not be present here today.”

He thus demands that his message be delivered to all mankind, to be transported from place to place, and from generation to generation for any human wishing to live a surrendered (°Islāmic) life; – a mandate laid on the shoulders of all those who were present. Within his ﷺ words were these the general prescriptions.

1. Witnessing (*shahadah*) the Truth that there is no deity other than Allāh and that Muḥammad ﷺ is the Messenger of Allāh.
2. Purification (*tāhirāh*) of the self both outer and inner.
3. Performing the prescribed daily prayers (*ṣalāh/ṣalawāt*).
4. Fasting (*ṣawm*) the month of Ramaḍān.
5. Paying *zakāt* (the purification (زكاة)) on ones wealth and fortune.
6. Performing Ḥajj at Makkah, once in a lifetime if one is able.
7. Inner & outer striving/struggle against any aggressor (*jihād*).

He goes on to speak of the equality of mankind in the sight of Allāh and in front of the law. Humans are born of a man and a woman – Adam and Hawā’ ﷺ; the parents of all humans who are each made of earth, water and spirit. No person is intrinsically better than any other. Equality is based on justice: All people are equal. No one can claim that he or she is better than any other human being except by virtue of, and through, piety, righteous deeds and truthful actions.

His ﷺ exact words (*translated*) are: “All mankind comes from Adam and Hawā’ ﷺ. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab over an Arab; Every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and all Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it is given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves.”

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He also speaks about brotherhood, women's rights, sharing and, importantly, understanding that he ﷺ is the seal of the prophets:

“Oh People! No Prophet or Messenger will come after me and no new faith (*dīn*) born. Therefore People reason well and understand these words that I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Qur[°]ān and my Family (*itrati*). If you follow these you will never go astray. (Muslim)

Finally he says,

“All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me now. Oh Allāh ﷻ, be my witness, that I have conveyed your message to your people.”

The reason I have gone back to this Farewell Khutbah are in these last words which then are of utmost importance in referencing the following [°]āyāt was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ whilst on his way to Ghadīr al-Khumm and thence to the people when they arrived.

يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

yā ā ayyuha-r-rasūlu balligh mā [°]ūnzila [°]ilayka mir-rabbika
wa-in lam taf[°]al famā ballaghta risālatahu
wa-llāhu ya[°]ṣimuka mina-n-nasi [°]
inna Allāha lā yahdi-l-qawma-l-kāfirīn

“Oh Messenger!

Make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, for if you do it not, you will not have conveyed His message.

Allah will protect you from the people.

Truly Allah does not guide people who hide the Truth.”

(Sūratu-l-Ma[°]idah 5:67)



Basically Allāh ﷻ is telling the Prophet ﷺ that, in spite of what he ﷺ said on the Mount of Mercy, there is still something more he ﷺ has to say. Accordingly, and before the caravan splits to go in its different directions, he orders people to gather together a number of camel saddles to form a makeshift *mimbar* (pulpit) which he ﷺ then mounts and calling their attention and gives what is, in reality, the end of the Farewell Sermon (*Khutbatu-l-Wadā[°]* / خطبة الوداع)

These are his words:

“Oh people, Allāh, the Most Kind, the Omniscient, has told me that no messenger lives more than half the age of he who had preceded him. I think I am about to be called (to die) and thus I must respond. I am responsible and you are responsible, then what do you say?” They said, “We witness that you have informed, advised and striven. May Allāh bless you.” He said, “Do you not bear witness that there is no deity but Allāh and that I, Muḥammad, am His servant and messenger, and that His Garden is true, His Hell is true, Death is true, the Resurrection after death is true, that there is no doubt that the Day of Judgment will come, and that Allāh will resurrect the dead from their graves?” They said, “Yes, we bear witness” He said, “Oh Allāh, bear witness.” Then he said, “O people, Allāh is my Lord and I am the lord of the believers. I am worthier of believers than themselves. Of whomsoever I have been Master (*mawla*/مولى), ^ʿAlī is to be his Master. Oh Allāh, be a supporter of whoever supports him and an enemy of whoever opposes him and direct the *Ḥaqq* (Truth) to ^ʿAlī.

Then he said,

“Oh my people, I will go ahead of you and you will arrive at my Pond of Abundance (*hawd/kawthar*) which is wider than the distance between Baṣra and San^ʿā. It has receptacles numrous as the stars, and two cups of gold and two of silver. I will ask you about the two weighty things that I have left for you when you come to Me to see how you dealt with them. The greater weighty thing is the message from Allāh (*al-qurʿān*). One end is in the hand of Allāh and the other is in your hands. Keep it and you will not deviate. The other weighty thing is my family (*itira*). The Merciful The All-Knowing has told me that they not separate until they come together to my Pond.

Another similar narration of the ḥadīth goes as follows

“Oh people! Reflect on the Qurʿān and comprehend its verses. Look into its clear verses and do not follow its ambiguous parts, for by Allāh, none shall be able to explain to you its warnings and its mysteries.

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Nor shall anyone clarify its interpretation, other than the one that I have grasped his hand, brought up beside myself, (and lifted his arm), the one about whom I inform you that whomever I am master of, °Alī is his master (*mawla*/مولى); and he is °Alī Ibn Abi Ṭalib, my brother, the executor of my will (*wasiyyah*/وصية), whose appointment as your guardian and leader has been sent down to me from Allāh, the Mighty and the Majestic.”

[Ṣaḥīḥ Tirmidḥī, v2, p298, v5, p63 – also in *Muṣṇad* of °Imām Hanbal, *Mishkat al-Masābiḥ* by Tabrizi.]



يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ



yadu-llāhi fawqa °aydīhim — The Hand of Allāh is above their hands.

A great number of Sunni scholars have declared the wide-scale transmission (*tawatur*) of the ḥadīth of Ghādīr al-Khumm, just as they advocate the validity of its chain of transmission, its soundness, and its clear signification for the Imamate of ‘Alī ibn Talib عليه السلام as well as his direct succession to the Prophet ﷺ.

Abu al-Khayr Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Jazri ash-Shāfi‘i, in respect to the ḥadīth of al-Ghādīr, thus stated: It has been widely and successively transmitted from Fāṭimah عليها السلام, in the same way that it, i.e. the ḥadīth of al-Ghādīr, has been conveyed with a wide-scale transmission from the Prophet ﷺ.

A large number of transmitters have reported it, so there is no regard for one who seeks to weaken it from among those who have no knowledge of this discipline. For it has been reported by way of traceability from Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, Talhah ibn ‘Ubayd Allah, al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwam, Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas, ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf, al- ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib, Zayd ibn Arqam, Bura’ ibn ‘Azib, Buraydah ibn al-Ḥusayn, Abu Hurayrah, Abu Sa’id al-Khudri, Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah, ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas, Habashi ibn Junadah, Sumrah ibn Jundub, Anas ibn Malik, and Zayd ibn Thabit رضي الله عنه.¹³

13. Sources of this ḥadīth through Sunni transmissionn:

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٢. Abu al-Qasim ‘Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn Hibat Allah al-Shafi‘i, known as Ibn ‘Asakir (d.٥٧٧ AH), Tarikh Ibn ‘Asakir (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr) vol.٢, p.١.
٣. Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Muhammad al-Wasiti al-Jilati al-Shafi‘i, known as Ibn al-Maghazali (d.٤٢٨ AH), Manaqib ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (Beirut: Dar Maktabat al-Hayat), p.٣٧.
٤. Abu al-Fadl Shihab al-Din Mahmud al-Alusi al-Baghdadi al-Shafi‘i, Ruh al-Ma‘ani (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr), vol.٤, p.٣٨٧.
٥. Muhib al-Din Ahmad ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Tabari, Dhakha’ir al-‘Uqba fi Manaqib Dhawi al-Qurba (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsi), p.٣٧.
٦. Al-Hafiz Shams al-Din al-Shafi‘i, al-Talkhis Bidhayl al-Mustadrak (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr), vol.٢, p.٣٧.
٧. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya‘qub ibn Ja‘far ibn Wahab ibn Wadih al-Katib al-‘Abbasi, known as al-Ya‘qubi, Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-A‘lami li al-Matbu‘at), vol.١, p.٤٧٧.
٨. Al-Qastalani, Sharh al-Mawahib al-Laduniyyah (Cairo: al-Matba‘ah al-

Azhariyyah), vol.٧, p.١٢.

١. ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Maliki, known as Ibn al-Sabbagh (d.٨٨٨ AH), al-Fusul al-Muhimmah (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-A‘lami (I al-Matbu‘at), p.٢٠.

٢. Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman Ahmad ibn Shu‘ayb, known as al-Nasa’i, Fada’il al-Sahabah (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah), p.١٥.

٣. Jalal al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr al-Suyuti (d.٩١١ AH), Tarikh al-Khulafa’ (Egypt), p.١٢.

٤. Jalal al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr al-Suyuti (d.٩١١ AH) al-Hawi li al-Fatawa (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-‘Arabi), vol. ١, p.١٢.

٥. Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir al-Baladhari, Ansab al-Ashraf (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-A‘lami li al-Matbu‘at), vol.٢, p.١١١.

٦. Abu al-Fida’ Isma‘il ibn Kathir al-Qurashi al-Dimashqi (d.٧٧٢ AH), al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ma‘arif li al-Matbu‘at), vol.٨, p.٢٩.

٧. Abu ‘Umar Yusuf ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Birr, al-Isti‘ab (Beirut: Dar al-Jil), vol.٢, p.١٨٩.

٨. ‘Abd al-Ra’wuf al-Manawi, al-Kawakib al-Durriyyah fi Tarajum al-Sadah al-Sufiyyah (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Azhariyyah li al-Turath), vol.١, p.٢٨.

٩. Al-Mahamili, al-Amali (Jordan: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah), p.٨٨.

١٠. Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Qaysi, Sharh Hashimiyyat al-Kumayt ibn Zayd al-Asadi (Beirut: Maktabat al-Nahdah), p.١١٧.

١١. Muhammad ibn al-Sabban al-Shafi‘i (d.٤٠٢ AH), Is‘af al-Raghibin (Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-Sha‘biyyah), p.١١١.

١٢. Muhammad Rashid Rida, Tafsir al-Manar (Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘rifah), vol.٢, p.٢٢٢.

١٣. Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d.٢٤١ AH), al-‘Ilal wa Ma‘rifat al-Rijal (Riyad: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah), vol.٢, p.٢٢٢.

١٤. Abu Mansur ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Muhammad Isma‘il al-Tha‘albi al-Naysaburi (d.٢٢١ AH), Thimar al-Qulub min al-Mudafwa al-Mansub (Beirut: Dar al-Basha’ir), vol.٢, p. ١٢.

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١٦. Nur al-Din ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Samhudi (d.٩١١ AH), Jawahir al-‘Iqdayn fi Fadl al-Sharafayn, Fadl al-‘Ilm al-Jali wa al-Nasab al-Nabawi (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah), p.٢٢٢.

١٧. ‘Abd al-Ra’wuf al-Manawi, Kunuz al-Haqa’iq (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah), vol.٢, p.١١٨.

١٨. Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn ‘Uthman al-Dhahabi (d.٧٤٨ AH), Mizan al-I‘tidal fi Naqd al-Rijal (Beirut: Dar Ihya’ al-Kitab al-‘Arabi), vol. ٢, p.٢٢٢.

١٩. Jalal al-Din ibn Abi Bakr al-Suyuti (d.٩١١ AH), al-Durr al-Manthur fi al-Tafsir bi al-Ma’tthur (Beirut: Muhammad Amin), vol.١, p.٢٢٢.

٢٠. Nur al-Din ‘Ali ibn Abi Bakr al-Haythami (d.٨٠٧ AH), Majma‘ al-Zawa’id wa

Manbaʿ al-Fawaʿid (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr), vol. ١, p. ١٢٩.

١٢. Al-Muwaffaq ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Makki al-Khawarizmi (d. ٥٢٨ AH), Manaʿiqib ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (Qum: Jamiʿat al-Mudarrisin), p. ١٥٢.

١٣. Rukn al-Din Abu Muhammad al-Husayn ibn Masʿud Abu al-Farraʿ al-Baghawi (d. ٤١٧ AH), Masabih al-Sunnah (Beirut: Dar al-Maʿrifah), vol. ٢, p. ١٧٢.

١٤. Abu ʿAbd Allah Muhammad al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi, Nawadir al-Usul fi Maʿrifat Ahadith al-Rasul (Beirut: Dar Sadir), p. ٢٨٨.

١٥. Kamal al-Din Muhammad ibn Talhah al-Shafiʿi (d. ٥٤٤ AH), Matalib al-Saʿwul fi Manaʿiqib Al al-Rasul, in manuscript, p. ٢.

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١٧. Abu al-Fath Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karim ibn Abi Bakr Ahmad al-Shahirstani (d. ٥٢٨ AH), al-Milal wa al-Nihal (Qum: Amir), vol. ١, p. ١٢٢.

١٨. Sulayman ibn Ibrahim al-Qunduzi al-Hanafi (d. ١١٢٢ AH), Yanabiʿ al-Mawaddah (Najaf: Al-Matabʿah al-Haydariyyah), vol. ١, p. ٢٢.

١٩. ʿAbd al-Raʿwuf al-Manawi, Fayd al-Qadir Sharh al-Jamiʿ al-Saghir (Beirut: Dar al-Maʿrifah), vol. ٢, p. ٢٥٨.

٢٠. Abu al-Muʿayyad al-Muwaffaq ibn Ahmad al-Makki Akhtab al-Khawarizmi (d. ٥٢٨ AH), Maqtal al-Husayn (Iran), vol. ١, p. ٢٧.

٢١. Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, Muntakhab Kanz al-ʿUmmal (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami), vol. ٥, p. ٣.

٢٢. Abu ʿAbd al-Rahman Ahmad ibn Shuʿayb al-Nasaʿi (d. ٢٢٢ AH), Khasaʿis Amir al-Muʿminin ʿAli (Iran), p. ٢٢.

٢٣. ʿAfif al-Din ʿAbd Allah ibn Asʿad al-Yafiʿi al-Yamani (d. ٧٢٨ AH), Mirʿat al-Jinan wa ʿIbrat al-Yaqzan fi Maʿrifat Hawadith al-Zaman (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risalah), p. ٢٢٢.

٢٤. ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿUmar al-Baydawi, Tawaliʿ al-Anwar (Egypt: Al-Diyar al-ʿAmirah), vol. ١, p. ٥٨٥.

٢٥. Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn al-Husayn al-Bayhaqi (d. ٤٥٨ AH), al-Iʿtiqad ʿala Madhhab al-Salaf: Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaʿah (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah), p. ١١٧.

٢٦. Al-Hafiz al-Tabarani (d. ٤٢٠ AH), al-Muʿjam al-Awsat (Riyad: Maktabat al-Maʿarif), vol. ٢, p. ٢٩.

٢٧. Abu ʿAbd al-Rahman Ahmad ibn Shuʿayb al-Nasaʿi (d. ٢٢٢ AH), al-Sunan al-Kubra (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah), vol. ٥, p. ١٢٢.

٢٨. ʿAbd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun (d. ٨٠٨ AH), al-Muqaddimah (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr), p. ٢٢٢.

٢٩. Jamal al-Din Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Zarandi al-Hanafi al-Madani (d. ٧٥٠ AH), Nazm Durar al-Samtayn (Najaf: Al-Qada), p. ١٢.

٣٠. Muhammad ibn ʿAbd Allah al-Khatib al-Tabrizi, Mishkat al-Masabih (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islami), vol. ٢, p. ١٧٢.

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Hujjat al-^oIslām, al-Ghazalī رحمته الله said: “These people have agreed on (the transmission of) the text of the ḥadīth in the sermon of the Prophet ﷺ on the day of Ghadīr al-Khumm of all present, when he said, “For whoever I am his master, (*mawla*) ^cAlī is his master (*mawla*)... So ^cUmar said: “Bravo, Bravo! Oh ^oAbu-l-Ḥasan ! You have become my master and the master of every master.”¹⁴



There are, however, extremist Sunnis on the net who say, “The ḥadīth of Ghadīr al-Khumm should only be understood in the context in which it was said: A group of soldiers were severely criticizing Ali (رضى الله عنه) over a certain matter, and this news reached the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم), who then said what he said in the ḥadīth of Ghadīr al-Khumm. Shi^ca propagandists attempt to remove this background context in which the ḥadīth was said in order to paint a totally different (and misleading) picture. “The intention behind the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) saying what he said at Ghadīr al-Khumm was not at all to nominate ^cAlī (رضى الله عنه) as Kḥalīf but rather it was only to defend ^cAlī (رضى الله عنه) against slander being circulated against him by some soldiers.

٢٨. Sayf al-Din al-Amudi (d. ٤٢٨ AH), Ghayat al-Maram fi ‘Ilm al-Kalam, (Cairo), p. ٣٧٥.

٢٩. Abu Ja‘far Ahmad, known as al-Muhib al-Tabari, al-Riyad al-Nadiraḥ fi Manaqib al-‘Ashrah (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah), vol. ٢, p. ١٧٧.

٣٠. Badr al-Din Abu Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-‘Ayani (d. ٨٨٥ AH), ‘Umdat al-Qari Sharḥ Sahih Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Isma‘il al-Bukhari (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr), vol. ١٨, p. ٢٠٩.

٣١. Muhammad ibn Mu‘tamad Khan al-Badkhashani al-Harithi (d. ١١٣٦ AH), Nuzul al-Abrar bi ma Sahha min Manaqib Ahl al-Bayt al-Athar (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Mufid), p. ٥٤.

٣٢. Al-Shabalanji, Nur al-Absar fi Manaqib Bayt al-Nabi al-Mukhtar (Al-Maktabah al-Sha‘biyyah), p. ٧٨.

14. Collection & Translation by www.darolhadith.net

١. Asna al-Matalib, p. ٤٧.

٢. Sirr al- ‘Alamin wa Kashf ma fi al-Darayn by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, p. ١٠.

٣. That is Abu al-Khayr Shams al-Din ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Jazri (d. ٨٢٢ AH). He declared it in his book Asna al-Matalib, p. ٤٧.

٤. See al-Mawahib al-Laduniyyah (Cairo: Al-Matba‘ah al-Azhariyyah), p. ٧, p. ١٢.

٥. That is al-Husayn ibn al-Mansur Billah al-Qasim ibn Muhammad (d. ١٠٥٠ AH). He declared it in his book Hidayat al-‘Uqul ila Ghayat al-Sa‘wul fi ‘Ilm al-Usul (Yemen). vol. ٢, p. ٤٥.

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Thus the view of Sunnis is, “It is only by removing the background context that it is possible to render a Shi^ʿa under-standing of the text; it is for this reason that we should always remind our Shi^ʿa brothers of the background context in which the Prophet ﷺ pronounced the Ḥadīth of Ghadīr al-Khumm.”

Where as the Shi^ʿa claim that the Prophet at Ghadīr al-Khumm by so doing and so saying, appointed ^ʿAlī (عليه السلام) to be his successor.

These Sunni extremists go on to say “If the Shi^ʿa can prove their version of Ghadīr al-Khumm, then definitely ^ʿAlī (رضي الله عنه) was divinely appointed by the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) and the Shi^ʿa creed is correct. If, however, the Sunnis disprove the idea that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) appointed ^ʿAlī (رضي الله عنه) at Ghadīr Khumm, then our Shi^ʿa brothers should be willing to accept the fact that ^ʿAlī (رضي الله عنه) was never appointed at all by the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) and therefore the entire Shi^ʿa creed is invalid.”

Usually then the discussion or argument then revolves around the meaning of the word *mawlā*.

Morphologically, the Arabic word *mawlā* also transliterated *mawla* is composed from the morpheme indicating place, lit. ‘noun of place’ (^ʿ*ismu-l-makān*) and derives from the root word وَلِيَ *waliya* (masdar/verbal noun: الولاية / al-wilāyah) classically translated as “to be proximal” [*mawla*] in Oxford Islamic Studies] [to both parties in a vertical relationship] or “to intercede”. Thus the semantic translation of *mawla* most closely resembles the phrase “place of intercession.” Historically, the word *mawla* has been interpreted to mean either master, protector or supporter; walī, wilāyah, ^ʿawliya^ʿ are its supporting synonyms. A *mawla* usually means the one who has more authority over be-lievers than they have on themselves. It can also mean a much more elevated person, a “master,” “lord,” “vicar” or “guardian.” It also has other secondary meanings such as ‘protector’, ‘master’, ‘sup-porter’, ‘slave’, ‘freed slave’, ‘helper’, ‘friend’, ‘loved one’ etc. Allāh ﷻ uses the word *Mawla* in various meanings in the Qur^ʾān. as can be seen in the following random selection of translations by Muslims and non-Muslims of ^ʿāyāh 47:11 in Sūrah Muḥammad:

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوْلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَأَنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ لَا مَوْلَى لَهُمْ

*dhālika bi-anna-llaha mawla alladhīna āmanū
wa an anna-l-kāfirīna lā mawla lahum*

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Pickthall: That is because Allāh is *patron* of those who believe, and because the disbelievers have no *patron*.

Yusuf Ali: That is because God is the *Protector* of those who believe, but those who reject God have no *protector*.

Shakir: That is because Allāh is the *Protector* of those who believe, and because the unbelievers shall have no *protector* for them.

Sher Ali: That is because ALLĀH is the *Protector* of those who believe, and the disbelievers have no protector.

Khalifa: This is because GOD is the *Lord* of those who believe, while the disbelievers have no *lord*.

Arberry: That is because God is the *Protector* of the believers, and that the unbelievers have no *protector*.

Palmer: That is because God is the *patron* of those who believe, and because the misbelievers have no *patron*.

Rodwell: This – because God is the *protector* of those who believe, and because the infidels have no *protector*.

Sale: This [shall come to pass], for that God is the *patron* of the true believers, and for that the infidels have no *protector*.

Dr. Laleh Bakhtiar: That is because God is the Defender of those who believed. And for the ones who are ungrateful, there is no defender of them.

Wahiduddin Khan: That is because God is the protector of the believers, and those who deny the truth have no protector at all.

T.B.Irving: That is because God is the Protector of those who believe, while disbelievers have no protector.

al-Muntakhab: That is because those whose hearts reflect the image of religious and spiritual virtues are under the tutelage of Allah, whereas those who deny Him are under the tutelage of nobody.

Sh. Nooruddeen Durkee: That is because Allāh is the Protector of those who believe and those who hide the truth have no Protector.

Abdel Haleem: That is because God protects the believers while the disbelievers have no one to protect them:

Abdul Majid Daryabadi: That is because Allāh is the patron of those who believe, and because the infidels! no patron is theirs.

Ahmed Ali: This is so for God is the friend of those who believe while the unbelievers have no friend.

Aisha Bewley: That is because Allāh is the Protector of those who have iman and because those who are kafir have no protector.

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In the face of the near unanimity of the translators across the boards the extremists then go to a tertiary meaning of *mawla* which is friend.

What they then say the Prophet ﷺ meant when he said: “Whose *mawla* I am, °Alī is his *mawla*” is; “Whose *friend* I am, °Alī is his *friend*.” and that is simply all he ﷺ meant, nothing more or less.

However it very hard to reconcile that meaning with all that went on from gathering the camel saddles and climbing upon on them an addressing the people and, even more strongly, the incontrovertible revelation which had come to him of the way to Ghadīr al-Khumm and, besides, everyone know that °Alī was his friend so why would he have to go to such complicated ends to make a public announcement of what everybody already knew to be so.

بَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

yāā °ayyuha-r-rasūlu balligh mā °ūnzila °ilayka mir-rabbika
wa-in lam taf°al famā ballaghta risālatahu
wa-llāhu ya°šimuka mina-n-nasi °
inna Allāha lā yahdi-l-qawma-l-kāfirīn

Oh Messenger!

Make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord,
for if you don’t do it you will not have conveyed His message.

Allāh will protect you from the people.

Truly Allāh does not guide people who hide the Truth.

(Sūratu-l-Ma°idah 5:67)



Interesting enough the °āyāh that was revealed just before this was, according to some Sunni sources, just after the completion of the Farewell Sermon on °Arafat on the ninth day of Dhū-l-Hijjah

الْيَوْمَ اكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَمَّتْ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

al-yawma °akmaltu lakum dīnakum wa °atmamtu °alaykum ni°matī
wa radītu lakumu-l-°islama dīnan

“This day, I have perfected your religion for you,
completed My favor upon you,
and have chosen for you Islām as your religion.”

(Sūratu-l-Ma°idah 5:3)

°Ibn Jarīr recorded that Harūn bin °Antarah said that his father said,

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“When the °āyah:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ

This day, I have perfected your religion for you,

was revealed, according to Sunni sources on the great day of Ḥajj (the Day of °Arafah and the ninth day of Dhu-l-Ḥijjah) °Umar رضي الله عنه cried. The Prophet ﷺ said, “What makes you cry” He said, “What made me cry is that our religion is being perfected for us. Now it is perfect, nothing is perfect, but it is bound to deteriorate.’

The Prophet ﷺ said, صَدَقْتَ meaning “You have said the truth.”

What supports the meaning of this ḥadīth is the ḥadīth:

إِنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ بَدَأَ غَرِيبًا، وَسَيَعُودُ غَرِيبًا، فَطُوبَى لِلْغُرَبَاءِ

“Islām was something strange in its beginning and will return strange once more. Therefore, Ṭūba¹⁵ for the strangers.”



However the Shi[°]a have a very different perspective on the time and place of the revelation of the verse “This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor unto you, and have chosen for you °Islām as your religion.” (Sūratu-l-Ma°idah 5:3)

The concept of the verse is not more declarative than the ḥadīth *al-wilāyah*, but rather it implies perfection of religion, and completion of the favor, and the pleasure of Allāh ﷻ, besides its containing a notification to the occurrence of an incident that day leading them to religious perfection.

15. Ṭūba = Ṭūba is for them and a beautiful place of (final) return. °Alī bin Abi Talhah reported that Ibn °Abbas said that Ṭūba means, “Happiness and comfort or refreshment of the eye.” °Ikrimah said that Ṭūba means, “How excellent is what they earned,” while ad-Dahhak said, “A joy for them.” Furthermore, Ibrahim an-Nakh[°]i said that Ṭūba means, “Better for them,” while Qatadah said that it is an Arabic word that means, “you have earned a good thing.” In another narration, Qatadah said that “Ṭūba for them” means, “It is excellent for them,” (and a beautiful place of return.) and final destination. These meanings for Ṭūba are all synonymous and they do not contradict one another. °Imām Aḥmad recorded that Abu Sa°id al-Khudrī said that a man asked, “Oh Messenger of Allāh! Ṭūba for those who saw you and believed in you?” The Prophet ﷺ said, “Ṭūba is for he who saw me and believed in me. Ṭūba, and another Ṭūba, and another Ṭūba for he who believed in me, but did not see me.” A man asked, “What is Ṭūba” The Prophet ﷺ said, “It is a tree in Paradise whose width is a hundred years, and the clothes of the people of Paradise are taken from its bark.”

Certainty in the veracity of this belief is even increased, when going through what is reported by Ibn Jarīr, on the authority of Qubaysah ibn Abi Dhū‘ayb that he said: Ka‘b said: “Had this verse been revealed on other than this community, they would have taken the day of its revelation as a feast in which they meet.”! Then ‘Umar said: O Ka‘b, which verse you mean? He replied: “This day have I perfected your religion for you.” ‘Umar said: I know the day and place in which it was revealed... that was on Friday, on the of Day of ‘Arafāt, and both of them are celebrated by us as a feast, thanks to Allāh.

Second: To believe that the verse “This day have I perfected your religion for you” was revealed on the Day of ‘Arafāt, is contradictory with the verse of proclamation (*‘ayāt al-balāgh*): “Oh Messenger! Make known that which hath been revealed unto you from your Lord” which commands the Prophet ﷺ to deliver a significant matter without which the Message is incomplete. The verse which we have discussed earlier, whose revelation was recorded to be in a place between Makkah and Madinah after the last ḥajj (*ḥujjat al-wadā‘*), the event that was reported by more than a hundred and twenty Companions, and three hundred and sixty of Ahl al-Sunnah ‘ulamā’. So how can it be sensible that Allāh ﷻ perfects the religion and completes the favour on the of Day of ‘Arafāt, and after only one week He orders His Prophet ﷺ, on his way back to al-Madinah to communicate a thing without which the Message is incomplete?

Third: If every investigating researcher ponders over the Messenger’s sermon on the Day of ‘Arafāt, he will not see in it anything new of which Muslims are unaware, or that can be regarded a significant matter with which Allāh ﷻ perfected the religion and completed His favor. It contains nothing but a re-counting of precepts that are cited in the Qur’ān and the Prophet ﷺ, mentioned on several occasions and emphasized them on the Day of ‘Arafāt. The following are the precepts stated in the sermon (khutbah/خطبة) as recorded by all narrators;

1. Allāh has made inviolable for you your blood and properties as the inviolability of this month and this day you are in. (i.e. Ḥajj)
2. Observe your duty toward Allāh and do not wrong people in their goods and do not act corruptly by creating troubles on earth.

3. Whoever has a trust (*amānah*) should restore it to its owner.
4. People in ʾIslām are equal. there is no special favor for an Arab over a non-Arab but only through piety, good deeds and actions.
5. Every blood consanguinity that was in the Islamic era is under my foot, and every usury that was made in the Jahiliyyah is under my foot
6. Oh Mankind, know that selling on credit is increasement in ingratitude — know that time is changed, returning to its first shape when Allāh created the heavens and earth.
7. Verily, the number of the months with Allāh is twelve months and by the command of Allāh, four of them are sacred.
8. I recommend you to treat women kindly, you have taken them as wives under the trusteeship of Allāh, and made their wombs lawful according to the Book of Allāh.
9. I recommend you to be kind to those whom your right hands possess, feed them of what you eat and make them wear what you your self wear.
10. The Muslim is the brother to the Muslim, he never cheats, betrays or backbites him; unlawful for him is his blood or anything of his properties or wealth.
11. The Satan has been hopeless to be worshipped any more, but is obeyed when you do things that you your self despise.
12. The worst enemy of Allāh is the one who avenges from other than his killer, and the beater of other than who beat him. Whoever is ungrateful to the favor of his masters, is ungrateful to what Allāh has revealed unto Muḥammad ﷺ. And whoever belongs to other than his (real) father, upon him will be the curse of Allāh and the angels and all people.
13. I am commanded to fight with people till they say: “There is no deity but Allāh, and I. Muḥammad, am the Messenger of Allāh. And when they say it, their blood and properties shall be protected by me except when it serves them right, and their reckoning is with Allāh.
14. Don’t return after me as non-believers, and being misguided, cut the neck of one another.

The above are all the points mentioned in the sermon of ‘Arafāt during the *hajjatu-l-wadā’* and all 14 points above are all collected from authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ/صحيح*) sources.



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This so as not to leave out any of his ﷺ precepts reported by the muḥaddithun. Looked at carefully do they have anything new in relation to the Sahābah? Not at all, whatever is contained in these points is stated in the Qur’ān, and its verdict (*hukm*) is demonstrated in the Prophetic Sunnah. And the Prophet ﷺ spent his whole life explaining to people whatever was revealed for them, teaching them all the minute details of affairs and necessities in life.

So in no sense then is the revelation of the verse of “*perfection of religion, completion of favor, and approval of Allāh*”. These precepts (*wasāyā*) that are known by all Muslims, but were reiterated by him ﷺ for the sake of emphasis, since this was the first time people could meet around him in large numbers, besides his informing them before going out to perform the hajj, that it was his last and only ḥajj, the fact obligated him to reiterate those precepts.

But when approving of the second notion, i.e. the revelation of the verse on the day of Ghadīr al-Khumḥ after designating al-‘Imām ‘Alī ؑ as a successor to the Prophet ﷺ and lord of the faithful, the meaning will be more appropriate and congruous. Because to succeed the Prophet ﷺ being the most important affair, and it is improper for Allāh ﷻ to leave His slaves and servants aimless, and for the Prophet ﷺ to depart people without appointing a successor, leaving his Ummah without a custodian. This is furthermore affirmed by knowing that he never used to leave Madinah without designating someone as his successor from among his Companions over it so how can we believe that he would die without thinking deeply and conclusively of the matter of who would succeed him?

I mention all that was in the Farewell Khutbah in the context of what I have cited earlier in order to draw attention to the importance of the crucial words received on the way to Ghadīr al-Khumḥ, “Make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, for if you do it not, you will not have conveyed His message.” (5:67). The tone of the verse is as serious as that of the ḥadīth: “He who dies without knowing the ‘Imām of his time dies in ignorance.” Briefly it may be said that the verse itself shows that its subject is so important that if the Prophet ﷺ does not make it known, that would mean that he has not fully conveyed the message of Allāh ﷻ.

Sunnis and Shi‘a both agree that Sūratu-l-Ma‘idah is the last surah revealed to the Prophet ﷺ, and this verse is one of the last verses of this sūrah revealed notwithstanding its place in the sūrah.

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In other words it was revealed when the Prophet ﷺ had already conveyed all other injunctions and teachings of ʿIslām during his 13 years stay in Makkah and 10 years stay in Madinah as the Prophet ﷺ.

This verse was among the last instructions of ʿIslām. What that instruction that was so important that if it was not conveyed all that the Prophet ﷺ did in the past would become nullified or void. You cannot indicate any subject connected with the last year or so of the life of the Prophet ﷺ which may be of such importance.

The ʾāyah in Sūratu-l-Maʿidah: “This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you and have chosen ʿIslām as your religion.” clarifies that something happened, which was so important that it perfected religion, completed the Favor of Allāh ﷻ to mankind without which ʿIslām could not be, and would not have been, what Allāh ﷻ wanted it to be.

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ declared: “It seems the time approaches when I shall be called away (by Allāh) and I shall answer that call. I am leaving for you two weighty (*thaqalayn*/ثقلين) things and if you adhere to both of them, you will never go astray after me. They are the Book (*kitāb*) of Allāh and my family (ʿ*itral*/إتر), that is my Ahlu-l-Bayt. The two shall never separate from each other until they come to me by the Pool (*al-hawḍ*/الحوض), of Paradise.”

The Prophet continued and said: “Do I not have more right over the believers than what they have over themselves?” People cried and answered: “Yes, Oh Messenger of Allāh.” Then the Prophet ﷺ held up the hand of ʿAlī ؑ and said: “Whoever I am his leader (*mawla*), ʿAlī is his leader (*mawla*). Oh Allāh, love those who love him, and be hostile to those who are hostile to him.”

To sum up, the Hadith al-Ghadir (of Whomever I am his master [*mawlā*], ʿAlī also is his master. Oh Allāh, befriend whoever befriends him and be the enemy of his enemy, and help whoever helps him and forsake whoever forsakes him, and keep the truth (*ḥaqq*) always with him) is a tradition concerning a great historical event upon whose reporting all the ʿIslāmic Ummah has unanimously agreed upon. We have previously referred to three hundred and sixty of Ahlu-s-Sunnah ʿulamāʾ with a far larger number from among the Shiʿa ʿulamāʾ.



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Immediately after the Prophet ﷺ finished his speech naming ‘Alī رضي الله عنه his successor, the following verse of Qur‘an was revealed:

الْيَوْمَ اكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَمَّتْ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

al-yawma ‘akmaltu lakum dīnakum wa ‘atmamtu ‘alaykum ni‘matī
wa radītu lakumu-l-‘islāma dīnan

“This day, I have perfected your religion for you,
completed My favor upon you,
and have chosen for you ‘Islām as your religion.”

(Sūratu Ma‘idah 5:3)



Thus there are two distinct narratives and it remains for the thoughtful Muslim to weigh all the dimensions of the these two narratives and come to a conclusion. But in examining the two narratives what we are really differing about is “when” a particular ‘āyāh was revealed some 1400 years ago though much hangs on how one answers that question of *when*.

Two months after this pilgrimage, the Prophet ﷺ came down ill.

One day after prayers, it is recorded that he ﷺ made supplication for the martyrs of the Battle of Uhud and then said to the Muslims,

“There is a slave among the slaves of Allāh to whom Allāh has offered the choice between this world and that which is with Him, and the slave has chosen that which is with Allāh.”

When Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه, his close friend and companion, heard this statement, he began to cry because he knew that the slave that the Prophet ﷺ was referring to was himself and that his death was now approaching very quickly.

Indeed after, the Prophet ﷺ became very ill to the point that he could not move and appointed Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه to lead the congregational prayers. During his final days, he was taken to the home of his wife ‘Ā‘ishah رضي الله عنها where after few days into his illness, he seemed to have recovered. He even went to the masjid. Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه seeing the Prophet ﷺ approaching stood aside to let him lead the prayer, but the Prophet ﷺ signaled to him to lead the prayer. That same day, he called for his daughter Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها and whispered something in her ear that made her first cry and then laugh. When ‘Ā‘ishah رضي الله عنها asked her after his death what he had said, to which Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها replied, (and which we have mentioned earlier) –

“The first time he disclosed to me that he would not recover from his illness and I wept. Then he told me that I would be the first of his family to join him, and then I laughed.”

The Muslims assumed that the Prophet ﷺ had recovered and were overjoyed. However, this joy was short lived because shortly after his illness became so severe that he lost consciousness. After an hour he woke and said to ʿĀʾisha رضي الله عنها,

“No Prophet is taken by death until he has been shown his place in Paradise and then offered the choice to live or to die.”

His ﷺ health took a serious turn on a Thursday. It is reported that the Prophet ﷺ asked for writing materials to write a statement that would prevent the Muslim nation from going astray forever. The first person to reply was ʿUmar رضي الله عنه, answering that there was no need for the statement, arguing that the Prophet ﷺ was delirious (*yahjura*) and that the Muslims had the Book of Allāh (al-Qurʾān) “Hasabuna Kitāb Allāh (the Book of Allāh is enough for us)”.

Ibn 'Abbas narrates:

“When the Prophet ﷺ was on his death-bed and in the house there were some people among whom was ʿUmar bin al-Khattab رضي الله عنه, the Prophet ﷺ said, “Come, let me write for you a statement after which you will not go astray.” ʿUmar said, “The Prophet is seriously ill and delirious and you have the Qurʾān; so the Book of Allāh is enough for us.” The people present in the house differed and quarrelled. Some said “Go near so that the Prophet may write for you a statement after which you will not go astray,” while the others said as ʿUmar said. When they caused a hue and cry before the Prophet ﷺ who said, “Go away!” Narrated ʿUbaidullah: Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه used to say, “It was very unfortunate that the Prophet ﷺ was prevented from writing that statement for us because of their disagreement and noise.” (al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 7:70 553)

Saʿid b. Jubair reported from Ibn Abbas that he said: “Thursday, and what about Thursday?” Then tears began to flow until I saw them on his cheeks as it they were the strings of pearls. He then said that the Prophet ﷺ said: “Bring me a shoulder blade and ink-pot (or tablet and inkpot), so that I write for you a document (by following which) you would never go astray.” They said: “the Prophet ﷺ is in the state of unconsciousness.” (Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (13:4015)

Of this event Sunnis say:

1. If Muḥammad ﷺ had been ordered by Allāh ﷻ to write down something, then no one could have prevented him from this – not even ‘Umar. This goes by the Muslim reasoning that the message of Allāh ﷻ cannot be silenced or withheld by anyone. However, the fact that Muḥammad ﷺ did not end up writing something down (neither then nor during the future days) only proves that the thing which was supposed to be written was already known to the Sahabah and Muḥammad ﷺ was aware of this, so he did not take the matter any further.

2. The accusation that ‘Umar رضي الله عنه prevented the Prophet ﷺ from writing down what he willed due to ‘Umar’s رضي الله عنه fear that it would contain orders of obedience to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, is nothing more than an unproven assumption and conjecture driven by ones predetermined feelings towards ‘Umar رضي الله عنه.

3. The obvious, visible and immediate interpretation of Umar’s رضي الله عنه behavior is that he acted solely out of concern for the health and condition of the Prophet ﷺ (as he saw most fit) due to his love and concern for the Prophet ﷺ, by not having the Prophet ﷺ burden himself during his present predicament of ill health. Likewise, other Sahabah who were present followed the same opinion as ‘Umar.

4. The Sahabah differed even among themselves in their reaction to the request of the Prophet ﷺ for a pen and paper i.e. they were not united in their opposition to the Prophet ﷺ writing something down during his illness. Some Sahabah opposed the request of the Prophet ﷺ, while others agreed with it. Therefore, there was no conspiracy (on behalf of the Sahabah) to “deny” ‘Alī رضي الله عنه his “right” to succeed Muḥammad ﷺ. Instead, the Sahabah were acting upon their own sincere assessments of the situation of Muḥammad ﷺ.

The condition of the Prophet ﷺ improved for a time after this incident and had it been important he would have then had it written down later.

One the other hand the Shi‘a hold that

1. Obedience to the Prophet ﷺ was required from every Muslim at all times. The Qur’ān orders Muslims regarding the Prophet ﷺ, “Whatever the Messenger commands you to do, you must do, and whatever he forbids you to do, you do not do”. [59:7]

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Therefore it was not the place of anyone to take matters into their own hands.

2. The idea that ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) disobeyed the Prophet (ﷺ) out of love is nothing more than an unproven assumption and conjecture driven by ones predetermined feelings towards Umar.

3. Shi‘a refer back to the events of Ghadir and Da‘wat dhu-l-‘Ashīrah which show that the Prophet (ﷺ) had already nominated ‘Alī (رضي الله عنه) as his successor. On the day of Ghadir, after the Prophet (ﷺ) had announced to those gathered, “Whosoever’s master I am, this ‘Alī (رضي الله عنه) is his master,” the verse of the Qur’an was revealed “This day I have perfected for you your religion.”

4. ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab (رضي الله عنه) claimed Qur’ān to be sufficient guidance, despite the well-known tradition that Muhammad (ﷺ) would be leaving two weighty things (*thaqalayn/ثقلين*), not one. These being the Qur’ān, and the Ahlu-l-Bayt, his (ﷺ) progeny or *‘itra*

5. The Prophet’s (ﷺ) own words were that if they followed what he wished to write down no one would go astray – hence it was a matter of grave importance.

6. ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) had spoken against the Prophet (ﷺ) on other occasions including the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah.

7. Both the first and third caliphs were able to implement their wills despite being in great pain. Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) had fainted during dictating his will; and Uthmān (رضي الله عنه) had multiple stab wounds, yet both considered it necessary to give details regarding their successor.

8 The Shi‘a do not claim that all the Saḥabah were part of a conspiracy. In fact only three Muhajirun left the Masjid of the Nabī (ﷺ) at the time of his death and were present in the hut of Saqifah (see following). The fact that there was mixed views on Muhammad’s (ﷺ) deathbed regarding writing his will, shows that Ibn al-Khattab’s opinion was not necessarily the best.

9. If ‘Umar’s (رضي الله عنه) intervention was designed to save the Prophet (ﷺ) any trouble or anxiety, it failed. An argument arose, the Prophet (ﷺ) grew became irritated and sent the people away. Throughout his life the Prophet (ﷺ) only ever displayed righteous and appropriate anger.

10. ‘Umar’s (رضي الله عنه) spoke about the Prophet (ﷺ) in an irreverent manner, when he said, “He is delirious (*lit. out of his mind/yahjura*).”

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11. There is no record of ‘Umar ؓ ever apologising for his behavior, despite the fact that the Prophet ﷺ lived for three days. If it was done in private, it would not have been appropriate, because his outburst was in public.

12. The matter was indeed known to everyone due to the Prophet ﷺ asserting the station of ‘Alī ؓ at every stage throughout his 23 year mission. ‘Alī ؓ himself asserted his right, and did not give allegiance for a full six months after the death of Muhammad ﷺ to the first caliph.

All of this is by way of background so the reader can be better acquainted with both versions of the most common narratives.



In any case the Prophet ﷺ like all of human beings finally died and it is said that the last words of the Prophet ﷺ were,

“Oh Allāh, with the supreme communion.”

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

‘inna li-llāhi wa ‘inna ‘ilayhi raji‘ūn

we belong to Allāh and to Allāh we return

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:156)



He was 63 years old. His death sent shockwaves through the Muslim community. Many, if not most of the community, were in disbelief. ‘Umar ؓ refused to believe the news and threatened anyone who repeated it. After confirming that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was indeed dead, Abu Bakr ؓ addressed the Muslims saying,

“Oh People! If Muḥammad ﷺ is the sole object of your adoration, then know that he is dead. But if it is Allāh you Worshiped, then know that He does not die.” He then recited the following verse.

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْفَلْتَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ
أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

wa ma muḥammadun ‘illā rasūlun qad khalat min qablihi ar-rusulu

‘afa‘in māta aw qutila inqalabtum ‘alā ‘aqābikum

wa man yanqalib ‘alā ‘aqibayhi fa-lan yaḍurra-llāha shay‘an

wa sayajzi-llāhu-sh-shākirīn

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Muḥammad is no more than an Messemger:

many were the Messengers that passed away before him.

If he died or were slain, will you then fall back on your heels?

If you turned on your heels it wouldn't harm Allāh in the least;

but Allāh (on the other hand)

will swiftly reward those who (serve Him) with gratitude.

(Sūrah °Āl °Imrān 3:144)



His ﷺ Death and Some of the Events Surrounding It

Narrated Anas bin Malik ﷺ: “A Jewess brought a poisoned (cooked) sheep for the Prophet ﷺ who ate from it. She was brought to the Prophet ﷺ and he was asked, ‘Shall we kill her?’ He said, ‘No.’ I continued to see the effect of the poison on the palate of the mouth of the Prophet ﷺ.” (Bukḥarī: Hadith 3.786)

Narrated Abu Huraira ﷺ: When Kḥaybar was conquered, a roasted poisoned sheep was presented to the Prophet ﷺ as a gift (by the Jews). The Prophet ﷺ ordered, “Let all the Jews who have been here, be assembled before me.” The Jews were collected and the Prophet ﷺ said (to them), “I am going to ask you a question. Will you tell the truth?” They said, “Yes.” The Prophet asked, “Who is your father?” They replied, “So-and-so.” He said, “You have told a lie; your father is so-and-so.” They said, “You are right.” He said, “Will you now tell me the truth, if I ask you about something?” They replied, “Yes, Oh Abu-l-Qasim; and if we should tell a lie, you can realize our lie as you have done regarding our father.” On that he asked, “Who are the people of the Fire?” They said, “We shall remain in the Fire for a short period, and after that you will replace us.” The Prophet ﷺ said, “May you be cursed and humiliated in it! By Allāh, we shall never replace you in it.” Then he asked, “Will you now tell me the truth if I ask you a question?” They said, “Yes, O Abu-l-Qasim.” He asked, “Have you poisoned this sheep?” They said, “Yes.” He asked, “What made you do so?” They said, “We wanted to know if you were a liar in which case we would get rid of you, and if you are a prophet then the poison would not harm you.” (Bukḥarī: Hadith 4.394)

When the Prophet ﷺ conquered Kḥaybar and he had peace of mind, Zaynab Bint al-Harith the brother of Marhab, who was the spouse of Sallam Ibn Mishkam, inquired:

“Which part of the goat is liked by Muḥammad?” They said, “The foreleg.” Then she slaughtered one from her goats and roasted it (the meat). Then she found a poison which could not fail. The Prophet ﷺ took the foreleg, a piece of which he put into his mouth. Bishr took another bone and put it into his mouth. When the apostle of Allah ate one morsel of it Bishr ate his and other people also ate from it. Then the Prophet ﷺ said, “Hold back your hands! because this foreleg informed me that it is poisoned.” Thereupon Bishr said, “By The One who made you great! I discovered it from the morsel I took. Nothing prevented me from spitting it out, but I did not like to make your food unrelishing. When you had eaten what was in your mouth I did not like to save my life after yours, and I didn’t think you would have eaten it if there was something wrong.”

Bishr ﷺ did not rise from his seat but his color changed to that of “*taylsan*” (a green cloth). Then the Prophet ﷺ sent for the woman who had cooked it and said to her, “What made you do it?” She replied, “What you have done to my people I have done to you. You have killed my father, my uncle and my husband, so I said to myself, “If you are a prophet, the foreleg will inform you; and others have said, “If you are a king we will get rid of you.”

When the Prophet ﷺ first felt sick, he got himself “cupped”¹⁶ Verily, whenever the Prophet ﷺ fell ill, he asked for recovery, from Allāh. But in the illness as a result of which he died, he did not pray for recovery; he used to say, “Oh soul! What has happened to you that you are seeking refuge in every place of refuge?” However Jibril ﷺ, read on him, “I call in the name of Allāh to ward off from you every thing that might harm you and (to ward off) every envier and every evil eye from you so Allāh may heal you.” bin Sa‘d

The Prophet ﷺ lived after this three years till in consequence of his pain and as the result of his poisoning he died. During his illness he used to say, “I did not cease to find the effects of the (poisoned) morsel which I took at Khybar and I have suffered several times (from its effect) but now I feel the hour has come.”¹⁷

16. Cupping is essentially drawing a small amount of blood from one’s body. The Prophet ﷺ believed that cupping was “the best of medicines”.

17. There is disagreement over whether or not the Prophet ﷺ had the women who poisoned him put to death. In short, he had her put to death for the death of the other Muslim – Bishr, who quickly died from the poisoning. See the reports by Ibn Sa‘d

Ibn Hishām ؓ said that he heard °A[°]isha ؓ say: The Prophet ؓ died on my bosom during my turn: [the night Muḥammad ؓ was to spend with her] “I had wronged none in regard to him. It was due to my ignorance and extreme youth that the apostle died in my arms.”

When he finally had died °Alī ؓ and some others took charge of washing the Prophet ؓ, but unlike others, he was washed with his his clothes remaining on his body. Narrated °A[°]isha ؓ “By Allāh, we did not know whether we should take off the clothes of the Prophet ؓ as we took off the clothes of our dead, or wash him while his clothes were on him. When they (the people) differed among themselves, Allāh cast slumber over them until every one of them had put his chin on his chest.” Then a speaker spoke from a side of the house, and they did not know who he was: “Wash the Prophet ؓ while his clothes are on him. So they stood round the Prophet ؓ and washed him while he had his shirt on him. They poured water on his shirt, and rubbed him with his shirt and not with their hands. (Abu Dawud 20:3135)

Ibn Hishām ؓ observed, “The Prophet’s ؓ body did not present the appearance of an ordinary corpse.” °Ā[°]isha ؓ also noted that If she had known beforehand what she found out later, “none would have washed him except his wives”. (Abu Dawud 20:3135)

Once the body had been washed, they covered him with triple shrouds. Abdullah ibn Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet ؓ, who presided at the preparation for the burial said: “The Prophet was shrouded in three garments made in Najran: two garments and the shirt in which he died.” (Abu Dawud 20:3147)

Finally, after a delay brought about by a dispute between the Anṣar and the Quraysh as to the place of burial which Abu Bakr ؓ settled by affirming that he had heard the Prophet ؓ say that a prophet should be buried at the very spot where he died. A grave was accordingly dug in the ground within the house of °A[°]isha ؓ which was next door to his ؓ own house (as well as that of °Ali, Faṭima, Ḥasan and Husayn ؓ (peace on them all) in the Masjid of the Prophet ؓ (*al-Masjid al-Nabawī*/المَسْجِدُ النَّبَوِيُّ) and under the very bed on which the Prophet ؓ died. In this grave his body was quietly buried in the same house in which he ؓ died.

There is full consensus among Muslim scholars that the Prophet ؓ died in the late afternoon of a Monday.

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However, there is some dispute among scholars on the time of the burial of the Prophet ﷺ. According to many scholars, the Prophet ﷺ was buried on Tuesday afternoon (one day after his death). (see *al-Bidayah wa-n-Nihayah* – Ibn Kathīr – Vol. 5)

The delay itself was due to several reasons: Most of the companions were in a state of shock that the Prophet ﷺ was dead – to the extent that ‘Umar ؓ, as we mentioned, with all his knowledge and strength of faith, could not even believe that the Prophet ﷺ had really died and kept denying it, until corrected by Abu Bakr ؓ.

Due to the great significance of the Prophet ﷺ, the companions, at first, did not know if they should wash (*ghusul*) his ﷺ body or not, how to wash it, if they should wrap it (*kafan*) in a certain way, where to bury the Prophet ﷺ, and how to bury him. All these questions took some time to answer plus the particular method, in which the burial prayer for the Prophet ﷺ was performed, required a longer time than the usual burial prayer. The burial prayer for the Prophet ﷺ was not performed in a congregation; all of the Muslims came to the room of the Prophet ﷺ in very small groups and prayed individually. The first to come were men, then women, and finally the children. (see *Siratu Ibn Hisham* – Vol. 4)

During this time most of the Muslims, and especially the men, had gathered in the al-Masjid al-Nabawī waiting for all of this to take place and waiting for the final procession in which the Prophet ﷺ would be taken to this grave not imagining that he would be buried in the home of ‘A‘ishā ؓ without any procession

During this time a rumor quietly circulated about a meeting of the Anṣars that was taking place three or four miles away at a small house called *Saqifat Bani Sa‘ida*. The purported purpose of this meeting was to choose a successor to the Prophet ﷺ – a *khalifa*.

Alarmed or, at least, concerned by this rumor Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and Abu Ubaidah ؓ quietly left the Masjid and made their way to the meeting place of the Bani Sa‘ida. Oddly enough the Prophet ﷺ had never visited this meeting place during his lifetime as it had a somewhat mixed reputation among the people of Madinah.

Though the members of Bani Khazraj and Bani Aws, two branches of the Bani Azd (sons of Ṭhalabah bin Amr) clan and among the oldest residents of Madinah had stopped fighting among themselves they always eagerly obliged the Prophet ﷺ and his companions ؓ.

Indeed, due to their originally giving the oath of allegiance (*bay^ʿah*) to the Prophet ﷺ they often boasted of their close relationship with the Prophet ﷺ and of their being from the tribe of Quraysh which was considered to be noblest clan of Arabia.

Their sole protector, the Prophet ﷺ, was no more. They had seen how some of the immigrants whose relatives were killed by the sword had now suddenly become more powerful. They could now take the revenge for the deaths of their family members and now there was no body to help them. The mistrust among both the tribes was always there and the fact that the immigrants whose mind and attitude was known to them might exploit this situation and rule made them more panicky. They now wanted to unite and fight these forces. They wanted to protect themselves and their children. With this fear in mind the Anṣars on hearing the news of the death of the Prophet ﷺ gathered to decide their future course of action. There was tension, commotion and arguments. Some wanted ʿAlī رضي الله عنه as their Kḥalif some wanted to choose somebody from among the Anṣars themselves. As they feared that they might be made the target of intrigues, conspiracies and politics of the muhajjarin.

Addressing the gathering of the Anṣars, Sa^ʿad Bin Obaida one of their leaders, said, “Oh helpers the honor and respect you possess today no other tribe enjoys. The Prophet ﷺ taught ʾIslām to his people for twelve years, but only a few obeyed and they too were so weak and humble that they could not protect him. They neither followed the tenets of ʾIslām in the true sense, nor were brave enough to keep his enemies away from him. Till Allāh ﷻ showed us the path of righteousness and gave us the honor of protecting his Prophet ﷺ and his followers and Allāh ﷻ called His Prophet ﷺ to Madīnah¹⁸, whose people were much satisfied that honor. He gave you courage to strengthen ʾIslām and fight its enemies. It was your swords which helped the Prophet ﷺ to crush the unbelievers. Therefore secure the leadership for yourselves as you are the most deserving.” The gathering agreed to his suggestion and, in turn, proposed *him* for the position of the new leader (*kḥalīfah*).

It was at this point when Umar entered Saqifat with Abu Bakr and Abu Obaida. Umar wanted to interrupt Sa^ʿad but Abu Bakr stopped him and himself spoke. “Allah ﷻ bestowed upon Muḥammad ﷺ His guidance and His religion and in turn Muḥammad ﷺ invited the people of Makkah to accept His guidance and His religion.”

18. His ﷺ mother was originally from Madīnah.

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We the immigrants were the first in whose heart the Almighty filled the respect for him and we bowed our heads before him. Those who followed us came next to us. Therefore we stood much closer to the Prophet ﷺ than others. We also belonged to the respected tribe of Quraysh. You helpers (Anṣar) from the people of Madinah gave us shelter and helped our religion spread, but your position before the Prophet ﷺ (in comparison to ours) was that of a Deputies. Allāh ﷻ in the Qur’ān has called you our brothers and partners and truly you have shared our sufferings and gains equally. By Allāh you are more dear to us than others. You have always been contented with what Allāh gave you. You carried His orders when he asked you to look after us, the immigrants (*muhajjarīn*), whom He sent to you. Therefore don’t be jealous of us. Help us as you have helped us before! Today it is your duty to see that the Muslims are not divided among themselves. Do not feel bad at the honor Allāh ﷻ bestowed upon your immigrant brothers. I therefore call upon you to pay allegiance to Ubaidah or ‘Umar whom I¹⁹ have chosen for the leadership.” Ubayda and ‘Umar however immediately rose and declined saying “You (Abu Bakr) deserve it more than us.”

Refuting Abu Bakr’s ﷺ remarks the Anṣars said, “By Allāh we are not jealous of what Allāh has bestowed upon you and we also ensure you that of all the human beings on this earth we love you the most. What we fear is that tomorrow a person who is neither from you nor from us grabs the leadership then what will be our position? Therefore it would be better if we have one leader from you and one from us, and let all the Muslims pay allegiance to both. We may also decide here that when the leader of the Anṣars dies, the Anṣars may choose another leader from them and similarly when the leader of the Muhajjirin dies they too will choose their own leader from amongst them. This system can go on for ever.”

Abu Bakr ﷺ did not argue with this and said, “Allāh ﷻ made Muḥammad His Prophet ﷺ so that his people, may pray to Allāh alone, though there were so many other gods from whom they (the people) expected prosperity and good things forgetting that they were all hand made gods and carved from stones or wood. Because the Arabs did not want to leave the religions of their ancestors Allāh ﷻ chose some people who, though they were very few, sacrificed everything they had in His name.

19. Note despite protestations of democracy and consensus concerning the role of leadership from the beginning this is highly singular operation.

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They suffered all hardships, faced oppositions but none of this deterred them from the path of His obedience. These people were the first to pray with the Prophet ﷺ, they should truly be called his near ones and deserve to be his heir. Anyone who challenges this right is a tyrant. Similarly your status among the followers of ʾIslām cannot be degraded. Allāh ﷻ created you to help His religion and His Prophet ﷺ and it was to you He asked his Prophet ﷺ to migrate. Therefore position wise we are first and you stand second. We are the rulers and you are our deputies. Whatever we shall do or decide will be with your consultations.” Sensing the intentions of Abu Bakr, the Anṣar Habab Bin Manzar said to the people, “Oh Anṣars do not pay allegiance to these immigrants. They are under your obligations and control. They are not strong enough to go against you. You are honorable, respectable, rich and more in number. You are also the fighting arms of ʾIslām. With your help ʾIslām was able to stand on its feet. Act as your people want you to act today, do not betray them and do not defeat your cause. It was you who gave refuge to the Prophet ﷺ when he migrated to your city. By Allah ﷻ they did not even dare to pray openly till they stepped on your soil. Even their Friday prayers were first offered here in our *masjid*. Our swords forced the infidels of Makkah to surrender before the Prophet ﷺ. Therefore you are superior to the immigrants and have more right to Kḫilāfah. This is not the time for us to be divided or be dispersed. This is the time for us to insist on our rights, and, if they do not agree to accept an Anṣar as the Kḫalīfah of all the Muslims, then let us have one Kḫalīfah from among the Anṣars and one from among the Muhajjirīn.”

Refusing to accept the suggestion of Habab bin Manzar, Umar said, “Two swords are not kept in one sheath. The Quraysh will never accept an Anṣar as their Kḫalīfa, because the Prophet ﷺ was not from them. The heir of the Prophet ﷺ must be from the same clan as that of the Prophet ﷺ only. And as the Prophet ﷺ was from the Quraysh therefore it is our right to be the heir of this government and its assets. This right of ours is unchallengeable. We are the near and dear ones of the Prophet ﷺ and whoever challenges this right is a sinner and will be damned.”

Hubab bin Manzar rose in anger and pointing at ʿUmar said to his men, “Do not listen to this man or his companions otherwise you will lose your right to govern. If they do not accept your rights throw them out of your city and choose your own Kḫalīfah.”

“You can do that because you have earned this position through your sword. If you agree with me, by Allāh, I can drive these people back and whoever gets in my way will be dealt with by this sword.”

Then Abu Obayda bin Jarrah ؓ whom Abu Bakr and ‘Umar ؓ had brought with them stood up and said, “Oh Anṣars, do not spoil your good name which you have earned by being the first to help the Muhajjirin and the first to give them shelter.” But nobody listened to him. When Baṣḥir bin Sā‘ad saw that the Anṣars are bent upon making Ḥubāb bin Mandḥar the Kḥalifa whom he hated most in spite of his being from the same clan and also his cousin, stood up and said, “Oh Anṣars we have earned our names in the wars we fought for the Prophet ﷺ and we have also earned the respect of being true Muslims, then why should we be so selfish today? Why don’t we put an end to this matter? We are already enjoying the high status Allāh ﷻ has bestowed upon us as the ‘Helpers of ‘Islām’ then let the heir of the Prophet ﷺ be from Quraysh as the Prophet ﷺ himself was from them. In my opinion it is not proper for us to dispute their rights of being his heir. I therefore request you to fear Allāh and do not defraud the immigrants of their right.”

Taking advantage of the difference thus created by Baṣḥir among the Anṣar, Abu Bakr rose and said, “I advise you to choose one of these two (pointing towards ‘Umar and Abu Obaida ؓ) as your Kḥalifa.” Umar ؓ immediately stood up and apologized, “How can I be a candidate in presence of a man of your caliber and status. You have embraced ‘Islām long before me, you are also rich and have the honor of being the companion of the Prophet ﷺ in the cave. Who can dare to challenge you.

Raise your hand and I will pay al-legiance to you.” Accordingly Abu Bakr ؓ stretched out his hand before ‘Umar ؓ, but before ‘Umar ؓ could grasp it, Baṣḥir bin Sā‘ad jumped up and holding Abu Bakr’s ؓ hand pledged alle-giance to him. Hubab bin Manzar shouted at Baṣḥir and said, “You are expelled from our clan. What forced you to do that? It is your jealousy towards me that has forced you to do that.”

Baṣḥir replied, “No it is not so! The Quraysh deserve this honor.”

When the members of Bani Aws saw that Baṣḥir who was from the clan of Khazraj and one of its leaders had stolen the initiative and had sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr ؓ, even before the immigrants could do so and have thus gained favor they too rushed forward and started pledging their allegiance to Abu Bakr ؓ.

“This lest they may have to face the wrath of the immigrants. They were so excited by this situation that one of them remarked, “If Sa‘ad bin Obaida becomes the caliph then his tribe will gain respect and we shall be treated as inferiors. Therefore let us (Aws) all pledge our allegiance to Abu Bakr ﷺ.”

Immediately Ḥubāb bin Manzar pulled his sword but was overpowered by his opponents and his sword was taken from him. The scuffle continued and Ḥubāb was heard shouting, “O Ansars, what are you doing? I can see your children begging on the doorsteps of the Muhajjirīn and not even getting water.” Abu Bakr ﷺ asked Ḥubāb if he was afraid of him. Ḥubāb said, “No, but I am afraid of your successors.” Abu Bakr ﷺ said, “At that moment you do what you deem fit. I will not come in your way Ḥubāb. But alas neither you nor I will be alive to see the disaster these people will cause.”

The fear of losing the sympathy of the immigrants grew so much among the Anṣars that they madly rushed towards Abu Bakr ﷺ to pledge their allegiance and in that melee, Sā‘ad bin Obada who was an old man was almost trampled underfoot. When his people protested Umar cried, “Kill him! May Allāh kill him.” Saying this ‘Umar jumped on Sā‘ad’s head and sitting on it he said, “I will crush you in such a way that your body will break into pieces.” Sā‘ad caught ‘Umar by his beard shouting, “By Allāh if you take even one hair of my body, I will break all your teeth and you will go home toothless.” Abu Bakr ﷺ separated the two and advised Umar ﷺ to cool down. Sā‘ad then told ‘Umar, “By Allāh if I had not been sick today, and if I could stand on my own you would have heard such echoes of my voice like a lion from the lanes and bylanes that you and your people would have vanished into the holes of this earth. If my health would have been better today I would have sent you to such people who would have made you their subjects and slaves and you would never have been Kḥalifah.”

Then he asked his men to carry him home without pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr ﷺ. Similarly many others who were neither in favor of Abu Bakr nor Ḥubāb bin Manzar went away saying we will pledge our allegiance only to ‘Alī ؑ and nobody else. ‘Umar ﷺ pledging his allegiance to Abu Bakr ﷺ said, “Think now that my strength has been added to your strength.”

Abu Bakr ﷺ was not happy with the attitude of Sā‘ad bin Obada and sent for him to come back and pledge his allegiance, but Sā‘ad refused and sent the messengers of Abu Bakr ﷺ back saying:

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“Tell him I will hit him with all the arrows I have and I will paint my lance with his blood. I, my relatives and the people of my clan will fight with him, and by Allāh if all the men and even the Jinns come to pledge their allegiance to him I will not pledge mine.” On hearing this ‘Umar رضي الله عنه asked Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه not to let Sā‘ad off but force him to pay allegiance to him. But Bashir رضي الله عنه intervened and advised them not to force the matter saying, “Leave him alone. Because if he has refused once he will never do it now even if you kill him, and he will not be killed till all his relatives are killed, and you will not be able to kill his relatives till you do not kill all the members of Bani Khazraj clan, and that will only be possible when you first finish off the clan of Bani Aws. Therefore, be content with what you have achieved. By sparing him you lose nothing.” Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه accepted Bashir’s رضي الله عنه advice and did not touch Sā‘ad.



All of this and the Prophet ﷺ was lying unburied. I ask the reader or listener to think deeply and consider all of this with great care.

I then ask the reader/listener to go back to this earlier quote.

The Prophet ﷺ continued and said: “Do I not have more right over the believers than what they have over themselves?” People cried and answered: “Yes, Oh Messenger of Allāh.” Then the Prophet ﷺ held up the hand of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and said: “Whoever I am his leader (*mawla*), ‘Alī is his leader (*mawla*). Oh Allāh, love those who love him, and be hostile to those who are hostile to him.”

And this ‘āyāt

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ

qul ‘atī‘u-llāha wa-r-rasūla

fa‘in tawallaw fa‘inna-llāha la yuḥibbu-l-kāfirīn

Obey Allāh and the Prophet

– and if they turn away –

truly, Allāh does not love those who hide the truth.

(Sūrah ‘Al ‘Imrān, 3:32)



and especially this ‘āyat

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

wa ma ‘arsalnāka ‘illa raḥmatal-li-l-‘alamīn

and We didn’t send you except as a mercy for all creation.

(Sūratu-l-‘Ambiyā‘ 21:107)

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and with those two [°]ayāt and the preceeding ḥadīth ask yourself if what took place at Saqifat Bani Sa[°]ida in any way is in harmony with the injunctions of Allāh ﷻ or the expressed wishes of the Prophet ﷺ in regards to who would succeed him.

I also want to remind you that this has nothing to do with the Sunni and Shi[°]ah polemics save, maybe, in later times.

What I had hoped to make clear through these two narratives that:

1. The Prophet ﷺ at Ghadir al-Khum in his speech made it very clear that [°]Alī ؑ was to be his successor when he said, “Whose mawla I am, [°]Alī ؑ is his mawla.”²⁰

2. That the events that took place at Saqifat Bani Sa[°]ida which resulted in the institution of kḥilafā were anything but the exercise in consensus and democracy that they are portrayed to be, albeit that the majority of Muslims have little or any idea of what actually took place there. Indeed [°]Umar later described the whole process that occurred at Saqifat as a *falṭa* or a rushed and hasty decision.

I also ask the reader/listener to understand the meaning of the [°]āyat:

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ

[°]atī[°]u-llāha wa-r-rasūla

Obey Allāh and the Prophet.

(Sūrah [°]Āl [°]Imrān, 3:32)



When the Prophet ﷺ who is, afterall, *the* authority after Allāh ﷻ, says something than that is it. If he says “whose mawla I am [°]Alī is his mawla.” that should be enough for any Muslim. So rather than thinking of Saqifat as a mere *falṭa* (much less shūra or putative democracy or mutual consultation) it is much more accurate to see it as an act of pure disobedience and, given that the Prophet ﷺ lay still unburied, an extremely impolite (*ghayr [°]adab*) display of political expediency mixed with personal ambition in the guise of protecting, enhancing and serving the nascent community (*[°]ummaḥ*).

20. I didn’t mention this ḥadīth due to the many arguments surrounding it based on the views of Ibn Taymiyya et. al. but it is worth noting.

“I am the city of knowledge and [°]Alī is its gate.” It was related by al-Ḥākim, at-Tabaranī and others. It was also related by at-Tirmidhī with the wording, “I am the House of Wisdom, and [°]Alī is its Door.”

Moreover [°]Alī ؑ did not fail the Prophet ﷺ in this position of gate or *bāb* as evidenced by the vibrant spiritual traditions descending from him in the spirituality of both his Sunnī, Shi[°]ah and Ṣūfī students

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The reader/listener might well wonder what is the point of digging all this up in view of the saying of Allāh ﷻ in al-Baqarah (2:191)

والفتر أشد من القتل

wa-l-fitnatu ashaddu mina-l-qatl

Sedition is worse than killing!

Look at these pictures from Syria, Iraq and Egypt and maybe you will understand why I have brought this subject up.



This is the price of disobedience and self direction.



You either obey Allāh ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ or you do not.

All of the above, and tens of thousand pictures like them, have been caused by Muslims killing Muslims. Shi'a, Sunni, Salafi, Moderates, pro-regime, anti-regime. Does it really matter anymore what they call themselves? In the Muslim world everywhere is war brought on by internal and external struggles. Israelis, Americans, Europeans, Hizbullāh, Jihadis, Takfiris, loyalists, activists, revolutionaries, reformers, deformers — a thousand and one different names all with the same agenda and all possessed by the shaytanic impulse of “I am better than you.” I’m right and your’re wrong. My way or the highway. Life is life and here the big dog eats first and run for your lives for all the windows are burning and the shells keep raining down and the children are dying. What’s left of our life?

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And if it is not enough to kill the living there are those who would kill and destroy and ruin those who have already died.



Grave site of the Mother ﷺ of the Prophet ﷺ after destruction



The tomb of Zuhayr Ibn Qais Ba-°Alawi ﷺ destroyed by a bomb.



It may be hard for the reader/listener to understand the various connections between all of this but one simple statement might help.

Mu[°]āwīyah, the usurper of the *khilāfah* from [°]Alī ؑ said, “I am the the last of the *khulafā*[°] and I am the first of the kings...”

Even now when we know what a shoddy affair the choosing of the first Kḫalīfah at the Saqifat of Bani Sa[°]ida was still one can argue that although it was definitely a political “happening” rather than a spiritual transmission that both Abu Bakr and [°]Umar ؑ tried their best for the Muslim community and, aside from the nepotism attached to the sinecure of [°]Uṭḫmān ؑ, he too provided much service to the community both before and after his “election” or perhaps “selection” as the third Kḫalīfah, his contribution in terms of the rationalisation and ordering of the Qur[°]ān was. and remains, of inestimable value to the community.

[°]Alī ؑ, when he finally assumed the *khilāfah* after the assassination of [°]Uṭḫmān ؑ, soon found that he was helpless and the prisoner of people who didn’t and wouldn’t obey him. The *khilāfah* had come to him as the gift of the rebels and he didn’t have enough force to control or punish them. When some people (among them [°]A[°]isha, Talhah, az-Zubayr and Umayyad especially Mu[°]āwīyah) asked [°]Alī ؑ to punish those who killed [°]Uṭḫmān ؑ, [°]Alī ؑ answered, “How do I have the power for it while those who assaulted him are in the height of their power. They have superiority over us, not we over them.” While the above wanted to take revenge for the death of [°]Uṭḫmān ؑ and punish the rioters who had killed him, it was not really possible. However some historians believe that they used this issue as a ploy to seek their political ambitions due to finding [°]Alī’s ؑ *khilāfah* against their own benefit.

Soon after [°]Alī ؑ became Kḫalīfah, he dismissed all provincial governors who had been appointed via nepotism by [°]Uṭḫmān ؑ, and replaced them with trusted aides acting against the counsel of Ibn Shubah and Ibn Abbas ؑ, who had advised him to proceed cautiously. [°]Alī ؑ was however deeply convinced of his rights and religious mission, and was unwilling to compromise his principles for the sake of political expediency and was ready to fight against overwhelming odds. Mu[°]āwīyah, kin of [°]Uṭḫmān ؑ and governor of Syria, refused to submit to [°]Alī’s ؑ order, the only governor to do so. [°]Alī ؑ believed that people have rights over each other and Allāh ﷻ had created these rights to cause equality to be the social norm.

The greatest of these rights that Allāh ﷻ has made obligatory is the right of the ruler over the ruled and the right of the ruled over the ruler. If the ruled fulfill the rights of the ruler and the ruler fulfills their rights, then right attains the position of honor among them, the ways of religion become established, signs of justice become fixed and the *sunnah* gains legitimacy. He wrote directions for his officials which clearly show what form of regime he wanted to introduce. It was not to be a regime whose officers had an upper hand and were fattened on public money. It was to be a regime where the governed and the tax-payers were at premium. It was their convenience for which the State was to function. It was a welfare-state working solely for the welfare of the people living under its rule, a regime where the rich cannot get richer whilst the poor are made poorer; a regime where canons of religion hold the balance between the governed and the ruler. He asked people not to speak with him as they spoke with cruel governors and be honest with him.

In spite of all this he was engulfed in one incident of fitna after the other. The First Fitna, 656–661 CE, followed the assassination of the caliph ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān, continued during the *khilāfah* of ‘Alī ؑ, and was ended, on the whole, by Mu‘āwīyah’s assumption of the *khilāfah*. This civil war is often called *the Fitna*, and regretted as the end of the early unity of the ‘Islāmic ‘ummah (nation). ‘Alī ؑ was first opposed by a faction led by Talhah, al-Zubayr and ‘A‘ishā ؑ bint Abu Bakr the wife, of the Prophet ﷺ. This group was known as the disobedients (*an-nakithīn*) by their enemies. First they gathered in Makkah then moved to Baṣra with the expectation of finding the necessary forces and resources to mobilize people in what is now Iraq. The rebels occupied Baṣra, killing many people. When ‘Alī ؑ asked them for obedience and a pledge of allegiance, they refused. The two parties met at the Battle of the Camel (Battle of Baṣṣurah) in 656, from which ‘Alī ؑ emerged victorious.

Then he appointed Ibn ‘Abbās governor of Basra and moved his capital to Kufa. Later he was challenged by Mu‘awīyah, the governor of Levant and the cousin of Uthmān ؓ, who refused ‘Alī’s ؑ demands for allegiance and called for revenge for Uthmān ؓ. ‘Alī ؑ opened negotiations with him with the hope of regaining his allegiance but Mu‘awīyah insisted on the autonomy of Syria (*ash-Shām* - الشام) under his rule and replied by mobilizing his Syrian supporters and refusing to pay homage to ‘Alī ؑ on the pretext that his contingent had not participated in his election.

The two armies encamped themselves at Siffin for more than one hundred days, most of the time being spent in negotiations. Although, °Alī ﷺ exchanged several letters with Mu[°]āwīyah, he was unable to dismiss the latter, nor persuade him to pledge allegiance. Skirmishes between the parties led to the Battle of Siffin in 657. After a week of combat was followed by a violent battle known as *laylat al-harīr* (the night of clamor) Mu[°]āwīyah's army were on the point of being routed when Amr ibn al-°Ās advised Mu[°]āwīyah to have his soldiers hoist *muṣḥaf* or *ṣaḥifah* (complete copies or papers inscribed with verses of the Qur[°]ān) on their spear-heads in order to cause disagreement and confusion.

The two armies finally agreed to settle the matter of who should be *khalīfah* by arbitration. The refusal of the largest bloc in the army of °Alī ﷺ to fight was the decisive factor in his acceptance of the arbitration. The question as to whether the arbiter would represent °Alī ﷺ or the Kufans caused a further split in the army of °Alī ﷺ. °Ash[°]ash ibn Qays and some others who later became the Kḥarijites rejected °Alī's ﷺ nominees, °Abd Allah ibn °Abbas and Malik al-Ashar, and insisted on Abu Mūsā °Ash[°]ari, who was opposed by °Alī ﷺ, since he had earlier prevented people from supporting him. °Alī ﷺ was urged to accept Abu Mūsā but never did. Those who preferred him decided to continue with the arbitration anyway. The Kḥarijites (schismatics), later opposed the decision to choose Abu Mūsā blaming °Alī ﷺ for his appointment and rebelled so °Alī ﷺ then had to fight them in the Battle of Naḥrawān. The arbitration resulted in the dissolution of °Alī's ﷺ coalition and some have opined that this was Mu[°]awīyah's intention from the outset.

Mu[°]awīyah's army invaded and plundered cities, which °Alī's ﷺ governors couldn't prevent and the people didn't lend him support. Mu[°]awīyah and his armies overpowered Egypt, Yemen and other areas which was strictly contrary to the Qur[°]ānic *dicta* of only fighting defensive wars.

This civil war and the ensuing fitna created permanent divisions within the Muslim community and Muslims were divided over who had the legitimate right to occupy the caliphate.

Finally on the nineteenth of Ramaḍān, while °Alī ﷺ was praying in the mosque of Kufa, the Kḥarijite, °Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Muljam assassinated him with a thrust of his poison-coated sword. °Alī ﷺ, wounded by the poison-coated sword, lived for just two days and died on the 21st of Ramaḍān in the city of Kufa in 661 CE.

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While we cannot say what could or could not have been, we can say that had the majority of Muslims obeyed the words of the Prophet ﷺ and taken ‘Alī ؑ as their *walī*, their *mawla*, the world would have been a very different place.

That simple fact is why I have tried to communicate the events surrounding the life of the Prophet ﷺ from the time of his premonition of death and some of the events that rose from that time.

Allāh ﷻ says that when a king enters a community he corrupts it.

إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعِزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً وَكَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ

‘inna-l-mulūka ‘idha dakhalū qaryatan afsadūhā
wa ja‘alū a‘izzata ‘ahliha adhillatan wa kadhalika yaf‘alūn

“Truly, whenever kings enter a community they corrupt it,
and turn the noblest of its people into the most abject.

And this is the way they [always] behave”

(Sūratu-l-Naml 27:34)

Understand then exactly the significance of Mu‘āwīyah’s statement,

“I am the the last of the *khulafā’* and I am the first of the kings.”

Here is a list of the kings and dynasties of only the Arabian part of the Muslim world. Do you wonder it is *how* it is? Or *why* it is?

- * Umayyad Caliphate (661–750 CE)
- * Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258)
- * Mahra Sultanate (774–present)
- * Hamdanid dynasty (890–1004)
- * Bani Assad (961–1163)
- * Numayrids (990–1081 AD) (Western Iraq)[1]
- * Marwanid (990–1085)
- * Uqaylid Dynasty (992–1169)
- * Artuqids (11th–12th century)
- * Burid dynasty (1104–1154)
- * Mirdasids (1024–1080)
- * Banu ‘Ammar (1071–1109) Tripoli, Lebanon[2]
- * Zengid dynasty (1127–1250)
- * Ayyubid dynasty (1171–1341)
- * Baban (1649–1850)
- * Alawite State (1920–1936)
- * Hashemite Dynasty of Iraq (1921–1958)
- * Hashemite Dynasty of Jordan (1921–present)
- * Rashidun Caliphate (632–661 CE)
- * Ziyadid dynasty (819–1018)
- * Sharif of Mecca (864–1496)
- * Banu Ukhaidhir (865–1066)

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- * Rassids (893–1970 AD)
- * Sharif of Mecca (967–1925)
- * Sulaihid State (1047–1138)
- * Banu Hatem Alhmdanyen (1098–1174)
- * Banu Masud (Makarama) (1093–1150) from Yemen
- * Ayyubid dynasty (1174–1341)
- * Rasulid (1229–1454)
- * Kathiri (1395–1967)
- * Jabrids (15th–16th century)
- * Tahiride (1454–1526)
- * Sultanate of Oman (751–present)
- * Qawasim Dynasty (1727–present)
- * Qarmatians (900–1073)
- * Uyunid dynasty (1076–1240)
- * Usfurids (1253–1320 century)
- * Jarwanid dynasty (1305–1487)[11]
- * Sultanate of Lahej (1728–1744/1839)
- * Mahra Sultanate (18th century–1967)
- * Emirate of Diriyah (1744–1818)
- * House of Saud (1744–present)
- * House of Al-Sabah (1752–present)
- * Al Nahyan family (1761–present)
- * Ajman (18th Century–present)
- * Qawasim Dynasty (18th century–present)
- * Umm al-Quwain (1775–present)
- * Al Khalifa family (1783–present)
- * Emirate of Nejd (1818–1891)
- * Sultanate of Muscat and Oman (1820–1979)
- * Sultanate of Zanzibar
- * House of Thani (1825–present)
- * Al Maktoum (1833–present)
- * Sharqi Dynasty (1876–present)
- * Qu'aiti (1902–1967)
- * Emirate of Beihan (1903–1967)
- * Kingdom of Hejaz (1916–1925)
- * Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen (1918–1962)
- * Sultanate of Nejd (1921–1926)
- * Emirate of Transjordan (1921–1946)
- * Kingdom of Nejd and Hejaz (1926–1932)
- * Kingdom of Iraq (1932–1958)
- * Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (1946–present)
- * Federation of Arab Emirates of the South (1959–1962)
- * Federation of South Arabia (1962–1967)

Similar lists for South-east Asia, Central Asia, Persia, etc. exist.

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And one can say, for the most part, all of them were rotten, corrupt, theiving, murdering, decadent regimes and are until today as many continue to exist until now. They are the source of a scene I saw on al-Jazeera TV last ‘Eid al-Adha which showed a mother (Shi‘ah or Sunni? hardly matters anymore) receiving the dead body of her son who had been shot leaving the masjid after ‘Eid prayers. Or another clip of a man cutting open the chest of a fallen soldier and ripping out his heart and liver and after saying, “Bismillah. Allāhu ‘Akbar” and proceeding to eat it. A young “rebel” with a 9mm Glock in hand going down a row a kneeling young men from another faction and blowing out their brains after piously saying, “Allāhu Akbar” then shooting each of them in the head at point blank range.

Allāh ﷻ says (81:26), “*Fā’ayna tadhhabūn?*” meaning, Where are you going (oh Muslims)? Where are you going?”

There are some who say there are no solutions to the horrible times in which we live and which the Muslims have lived, with a few exceptions, from the time of Mu‘āwīyah (and maybe even earlier) to the present. But we believe there is a solution and that moreover there has always been a solution right in front of us and some of us have reached out and taken that solution by the hand.

It is still possible to fulfill the order of the Prophet ﷺ for whilst events proceeded on another more political tangent yet the spiritual dimension, the dimension of *walaya*, of spiritual love continued and continues to exist. There are people that believed that ‘Alī ؑ was indeed the *wali* and took his hand. And when he died he left people whose hand had been in his hand who in turn gave their hand to those who took their hand all the way into the present time. The school of ‘Alī ؑ which was developed and first blossomed during the 26 years that the *Khulafā’* were busy with other matters it is still alive and still exists and, indeed, thrives even if as a minority.

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا
لِّنُكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

wa kadhalika ja‘alnākum ‘ummatan wasaṭan li-takūnū shuhadā‘a
‘ala-n-nāsi wa yakūna-r-rasūlu ‘alaykum shahīdā

And thus We have willed you to be a community of the middle way,
so that you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind,
and that the Prophet might bear witness to it before you...

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:143)

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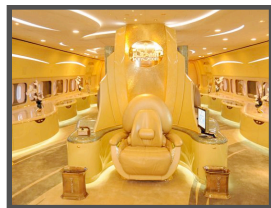
And these are the ones who have faithfully followed the injunction of Allāh ﷻ to be the people of the middle way – *‘ummatun wassatun*

There are many ways of speaking of this middle way. On one hand if we go back to events in Syria, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, Afghanistan we can see that the two school approach of Sunnism and Shi‘ism has in many ways failed the ‘umma in the sense of their faithlessness in concern to Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ in so far as they carry out, for the most part, neither the express teachings of one or the other.

I began noticing this some years ago and when I began speaking about an ‘Islām that had been hijacked by which I refer to such things as the Taliban (in colusion with the CIA et al.) being, after the phamecutical companies, the biggest dealers of narcotics in the world, of the killing of innocent civilians in masājid and market places or throwing acid in the faces of young girls whose only crime was seeking to educate themselves etc.

Because most of the Muslims I know are not at all like that and, statistically, the people who carry out such henious crimes even though they call themselves Muslims and dress up like Muslims (beards, shawal khomeez, immamas etc) are less than a small percentage of 1% of the Muslim population, nevertheless they are the ones who the media chooses to identify as Muslims and many people are quite willing to think that *all* Muslims are terrorists.

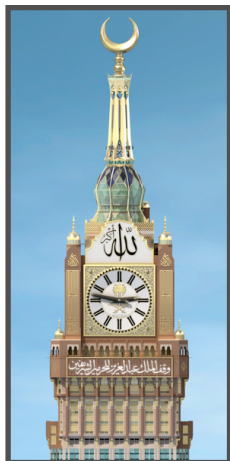
For this and other reasons I began to think along the lines of a “hijacked” ‘Islām. But the deeper I looked into the more I began to see that it is not really that ‘Islām has been hijacked but rather, it has been counterfeited and that what walks like a duck, quacks like a duck etc. is not really a duck at all. Take a look at these pictures.



While half his people live in poverty, Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud shows off his \$485 million converted Airbus A380 – the world’s largest private jet with the “Prince” seated on his throne made of gold in the center of the plane. Then look at the room of the house of the Prophet ﷺ in Makkah and weep. (over)

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Or look at this recent photograph of the new clock tower in Makkah embazoned with the “royal” coat of arms. Note the size of the clock is bigger than the the Ka[°]bah way down below it.



Room in the house of the Prophet ﷺ in Makkah (prior to destruction)

إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُ

°inna-l-mulūka °idḥa dakḥalū qaryatan afsadūhā

“Truly, whenever kings enter a community they corrupt it.”

(Sūratu-l-Naml 27:34)

Perhaps these pictures serve to clarify at a certain level what we mean by counterfeit °Islām, at least on the outer planes, but to look on a deeper level consider this:

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At a deeper level – to the point of a community of the middle way when we speak of Allāh ﷻ we usually come about it from two sides.

Either we speak of Allāh from the perspective of *ta^ʿtil* which is the absolute beyond of the Divine Reality or we speak of the dimension of *tashbiḥ* which is the realm of Names and Attributes.

On the extreme of *ta^ʿtil* we enter into agnosticism and on the extreme of *tashbiḥ* we fall into metaphysical idolatry. Some have looked deeply into this only to be caught in the trap of an infernal dialectic seeking the tawhid of the unification of the Unique. On one hand we find those who quote over and over the Qur^ʿānic dictum, “He is not like anything else.” and, on the other hand, we hear those who quote, “Wherever you turn is the Face of Allāh.” So what is the way out of this trap that sounds like a looped tape.

In one word – Love (*mahabbah*) – or perhaps – Mercy (*rahmah*) – which is the central teaching in the school of ʿImām ʿAlī ؑ or – again perhaps – the overriding principle of *walayah*.

ʿImām Ja^ʿfar ؑ says of this, “Gather all this with care, for it is a treasury of knowledge, secret and hidden, show it only to those who are worthy and H. Corbin writes, “The Religion of Walayah is the religion of spiritual love.”

Go back to the day of Ghadīr al-Khumm when the Prophet ﷺ stood on the piled up camel saddles and lifted ʿAlī ؑ up to stand with him and raised ʿAlī’s ؑ hand and said “Whose *mawla* I am ʿAlī is his *mawla*.” there were those who got it and those who didn’t.

Those who got it were the lovers. Those who didn’t — didn’t.

It helps to understand the connection between *wilayah* and *walī*.

Arabic is a very rich language, one word at times conveys many meanings. The word ‘*walī*’ means; friend, guardian, protector, owner, relative. The *walī* is the one, whose instructions are followed, men obey his commands; the ways, customs and laws of *walī* are followed (Qur^ʿān; 4:119-120, 7:3, 27-30). Secondly, *walī* is the one, whose guidance is trusted, it is thought that *walī* is the one to show the right way and save from error (Qur^ʿān; 2:257, 17:97, 18:17,50, 45:19). Thirdly, the *walī* is the one about whom a person thinks that, whatever he or she does in this world, the *walī* will save him, (Qur^ʿān; 4:123, 173, 6:51, 13:37, 29:22, 33:65, 39:3). Fourthly, the *walī* is the who helps in this world through super-natural ways, protects from calamities, provides means of sustenance, grants children and helps to meet all other requirements. Why we say *madat yā rasul-ullah*. (Qur^ʿān ;11:20, 13:16, 29:41).

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At some places in Qur^oān the word ‘*walī*’ has been used in one of these meanings while at other places it comprehensively encompasses all the meanings, as in Qur^oān, Allāh ﷻ says: “Those who take others as their *awliyā*’ besides Him, Allāh ﷻ is watching them.” (Qur^oān; 42:6). When the word *walī* or *awliyā*’ is used among believers it is used in the meanings of ‘friend’ or ‘protecting friends’: “And the believers, men and women, are protecting friends (*awliyā*’) one of another; they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, and they establish worship and they pay the poor-due, and they obey Allāh and His messenger. As for these, Allāh will have mercy on them. Lo! Allāh is Mighty, Wise.” (Qur^oān; 9:71). Where ever the word *walī* is used with reference to Allāh ﷻ, it is does not mean like human friends, but it is used in the meanings of Guardian, Protector, Owner: “Allāh is the *Walī* (Protector) of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light. Of those who reject faith their patrons (*awliyā*’) are the Evil Ones: from light they will lead them forth into the depths of darkness. They will be companions of the fire to dwell therein (forever).” (Qur^oān; 2:257). “...He ﷻ named you Muslims before in prior scriptures and in this (Qur^oān), so that His Messenger may testify against you and you yourselves may testify against the rest of mankind. Therefore, establish Ṣalah, pay the Zakah and hold fast to Allāh — Who is your Protector (*Mawlā*) — and what an excellent Protector and what a splendid Supporter!” (Qur^oān; 22:78), “Lo! those of mankind who have the best claim to ʾIbrāhīm are those who followed him, and this Prophet and those who believe (with him) that Allāh is *the* Protecting Friend of the believers (*wali-l-muʾminīn*)” (Qurʾan;3:68)

Taking all of this into consideration what one is left with is the meaning, whether at the Divine or at the human level of a true friend. Perhaps one of the rarest things in all the worlds! The one who always has your back through thick and thin. The one upon whom you can always rely – oh so rare – so very very rare.

And that is who the Prophet ﷺ is to his followers. He ﷺ knew he was going to die and out of his infinite concern he wanted to make sure, and Allāh ﷻ wanted him to tell the people to reassure them and give them the hope, that there was someone who would, and could, continue in that position for individuals and the ʿummah.

Some people get it and some didn’t and still don’t. That makes all the difference between a religion of legalistic dictums and one of love.

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A poet friend of mine once wrote: “Contact is the only love!”

That is one of the reasons why the Prophet ﷺ held up the hand of ʿAlī ؑ. He wanted to show the people the means of that contact. The hand – the holy hand of which poet Nasir Khusro ؒ wrote:

“That sage then set his hand upon his heart

(a hundred blessings be on that hand and heart!)

And said, I offer you the remedy of proof and demonstration;
but if you accept,

I shall place a seal upon your lips which must never be broken.

I gave my consent and he affixed the seal.

Drop by drop and day by day he fed me the healing potion,
till my sickness disappeared.”

The meaning of the ʾImām, the true guide, teacher and friend, inner or outer is that he is the one who is the initiator of the seeker into knowledge of him or herself. Once a person has been truly initiated, and given themselves wholly into the Holy Promise – *the bay^ʿah* – that person begins to understand how and why love of Allāh ﷻ is not possible without the love for and of the ʾImām – the friend – the *walī* who makes true and real the meaning of, “Who knows himself knows his Lord.” (من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه).

And from that – this: “To grasp my teaching demands an effort so heroic that it is only for an angel drawn near, a messenger-prophet, or a believer whose heart has been tested for faith.”

The first thing we will be questioned about after we die is our love. If we professed this love (*wilāyah*) in and throughout our life and died professing that love, then our prayer, our fasting, our zakat, our pilgrimage are all acceptable to Allāh ﷻ. If we have not professed our love then none of our works will be acceptable to Allāh ﷻ.

In other words all actions must originate from the inner being – pious works and action must all stem from and originate in the true sentiment of love otherwise they are an empty formality. And who can show us, who can know us, but the one who has realised it.

In recent years I have spoken and written about the journey of our time or, perhaps, of all time.

Most Muslims have heard of those early sincere seekers from the ʾummah who would travel hundreds, if not thousands, of miles in search of one authentic ḥadīth. In our time we *must* make that journey to find our true teacher, ʾImām, realised guide who will extend to us the Holy Hand and take us aboard the Ship of Safety.

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That is what was on offer that day at Ghadīr al-Khumm.

But only some among the thousands gathered took that Hand (then and now) and within months it became a mainly forgotten promise and other hands were at work.

From then till now the majority say, “What need do we have of that Hand.” They reject the significance of that day – then and now. For some it was, if anything, simply the Prophet ﷺ settling a problem between [°]Alī and some disgruntled soldiers.

Why then would the Prophet ﷺ have received the following [°]āyāt and gathered everyone together one more time in order to give them the news that “Whose mawlā I am [°]Alī is his mawlā.”?

بَايَاهُمَا الَّذِي سَوَّلَ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ

yāā [°]ayyuha-r-rasūlu balligh mā [°]unzila [°]ilayka mir-rabbika
wa-in lam taf[°]al famā ballaghta risālatahu

Oh Messenger!

Make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord,
for if you do it not, you will not have conveyed His message.

(Sūratu-l-Ma[°]idah 5:67)

We, as simple human beings, realise without doubt that no organised society, be it a country or a city or a village or a tribe or even a household can long continue to function or operate without a leader or responsible person. Without a leader or person of responsibility none of these units can continue and will be broken and dispersed and in a short time disorder, *fitna* and confusion will reign.

Therefore one who is a leader or governor will, of necessity, appoint a successor for himself if he intends to be absent from his function temporarily or permanently be the unit as small as a family or a corner grocery store or as great as a large corporation or country.

Allamah Tabataba[°]i writes: “The Prophet displayed great interest in the problem of succession and never failed to appoint a successor when necessary. Whenever he left Madinah he appointed a governor in his own place. When he migrated from Makkah to Madinah and there was no idea as to what would occur, in order to have his personal affairs managed in Makkah he appointed [°]Alī to oversee his affairs. In the same way, after his death [°]Alī was his successor in matters concerning his debts and personal affairs. For this reason it is not conceivable that the Prophet should have died without appointing someone as his successor, without having selected a guide and leader to direct the affairs of Muslims and the Islamic society.”

So looked at from an inner *baṭinī* or an outer *ḍahirī* perspective we come to more or less the same conclusion. Although a purely *outer* or *ḍahirī* perspective does allow for more latitude into “who” exactly *could* have succeeded the Prophet ﷺ given there are still a significant number of Muslims who believe that the Prophet ﷺ was simply defending ‘Alī ؑ in the case of the disgruntled soldiers but even from that *ḍahirī* perspective it was still the hand of ‘Alī ؑ that he raised and no other and it was still ‘Alī ؑ of whom he said, “Whose *mawlā* I am ‘Alī is his *mawlā*.”

And really, in the end, it is not a question of what really did or did not happen all those many years ago but rather it is really a question of love – and the knowledge that there is a friend who will always have your back and never put a knife in it.

That is your *mawlā* and he is the *walī* and ‘Alī ؑ is the *walī* but only if you have no doubt that he, in whatever form, is the one who will always love you and provide you with guidance and teaching.

I once wrote of my shaykh, “Oh Murshid in the garden of my being you see the flower of perfection.” and it has taken me many years to realise that it was only because he could see the flower of perfection in me that I could see or was made to see that very flower of perfection before my own eyes.

There is a form of gnosticism or mysticism which is called apophatic – a negative path, *via negativa* or *via negationis* which means the “negative way” or “by way of denial”. It is a theology that attempts to describe Allāh ﷻ, the Divine Good, by negation, to speak only in terms of what may not be said about the perfect Goodness that is Allāh ﷻ,

The theologian John Scotus Eriugena (815-77) said: “We do not know what God is nor does God know what He is because He is not anything. Literally God is not, because He transcends being.”

The *via negativa*, “He is not like anything – *Huwa laysa kamithlihi shay’un*,” (هو ليس كمثله شيء) is an attempt to clarify religious experience and language about the Divine Good through discernment, gaining knowledge of what Allāh ﷻ *is not* (*apophasis*), rather than by describing what Allāh ﷻ really and truly *is*.

What we are talking about here is the exact opposite or, perhaps, a higher level of the *apophatic* way which is the *kataphatic* way – expressing Allāh ﷻ or the Divine through positive terminology. This is in contrast to defining Allāh ﷻ or the Divine in what is not, which is the negative or *apophatic* way we have explained above.

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The word *kataphatic* itself is formed from two Greek words, “*kata*” meaning to descend and “*femi*” meaning to speak. Thus, to combine them translates the word roughly as “to bring Allāh ﷻ down in such a way so as to speak of Him or rather the way in which Allāh ﷻ speaks which in essence is what the Qur^oān *is*.”

As we have said elsewhere: there is *waḥy* and there is *wilāya*.

The *walī* (who is the manifestation of *wilāya*) is the form that the *deus revelatus* assumes in the knowledge of self which is the knowledge of Allāh ﷻ.

As we said, “To know one self is to know one’s Lord.”

The *walī* is the form of his knowledge and his love of Allāh ﷻ.”

The *walī* is the ^oImam – the Guide – the Quṭb – and as such is the form of love and the secret of being for his being is Itself the love.

This is the eternal prophetic religion, all the followers of all the Prophets ﷺ and all their believers profess this same *wilāya*.

As Ḥasan ibn ^oAlī ؑ says, “Whoever denies the eminence of the Prince of the Believers (^oAlī ؑ) gives lie to the Gospels, to the Torah, to the Psalms and the Scrolls (*suhuf*) of Ibrahim and Mūsā ؑ and all other Books and Prophets that have come from Allāh ﷻ.

All love of Allāh ﷻ is *wilāya* of the *walī* by virtue of the fact that love postulates a Deity that is the object of Love and the *walī* is that object as there is no knowledge of Allāh ﷻ other than the knowledge of your *Walī*, your Guide, your *Quṭb*, your *A^oraf*, your Witness imparts to you. The Qur^oān is the “silent” ^oImām and the *Walī* is the “speaking” Qur^oān and truly contact *is* the only love.

Someone asked: “Muḥammad ﷺ was the Warner, ^oAlī ؑ was the Guide but is there a Guide today and if so where is he?

The answer is; “I swear to you by Allāh ﷻ in this House there has always been a Guide, one succeeding an other and now your turn has come for if an ^oāyāt has been revealed for a man and that man died the ^oāyāt would die with him and by now the whole Book would be dead. No! The Qur^oān is alive and will continue to be for those who live in the future as for those who have lived in the past.”

أنا مدينة العلم، وعلي بابها، فمن أراد العلم، فليأت الباب

^oAnā madīnatu-l-^oilm wa ^oAlī bābuhā; fa-man ^oarada-l-^oilm fa-l-yati-l-bāb

I am the city of knowledge and ^oAlī is its gate;

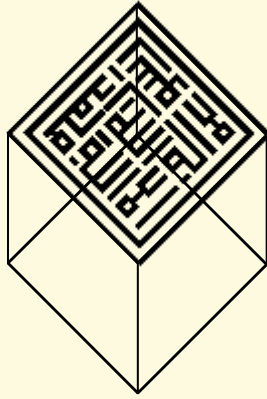
so whoever desires knowledge, let him enter the gate.

(*al-Mustadrak*, by al-Hakim, *Fada^oil as-Sahaba*, by Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal)

wa-llāhu ^oalim



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green mountain

virginia

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